PLUS! DAN AYKROYD ON THE '84 CLASSIC

EMPIRE

JUNE 2016
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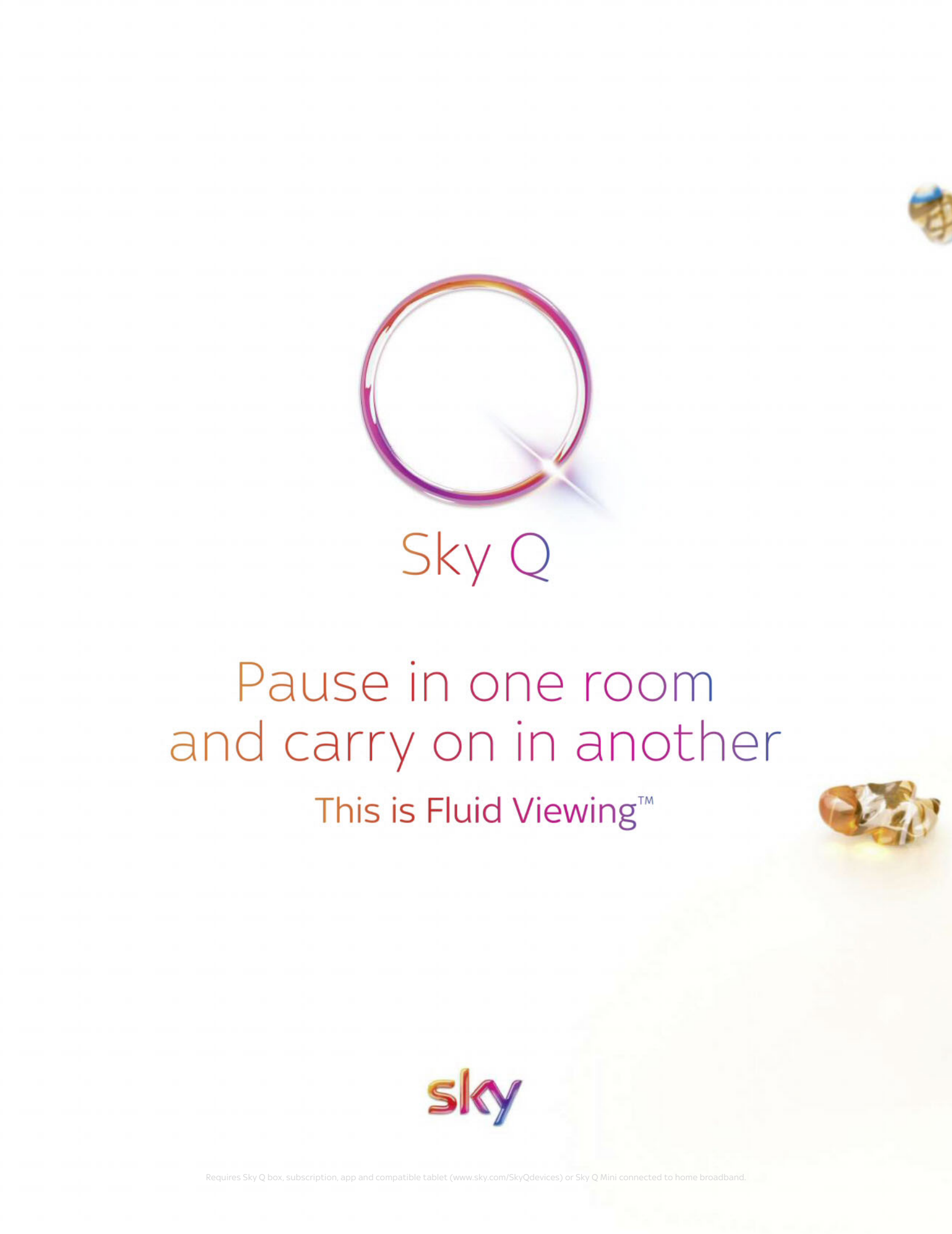


GHOSTBUSTERS

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ED'S LETTER

THERE ARE CERTAIN FILMS THAT SHOULD BE LEFT alone. We don't want a remake of *Jaws*. We don't need a fourth *Back To The Future*. We have no desire to discover Rick and Ilsa secretly rekindled their relationship after the War, or find out if Andy and Red's boat-refurbishing business was a success. These films are best left untouched. Timeless. Classic. But then, there are others that have been crying out for new instalments. And every time one of the original players has been interviewed over the decades, they're asked: "When are you doing another one?"

Ghostbusters was one such film and, after years of rumours and multiple false starts, a third movie is almost upon us. New cast. New director. But not that different — as with the original it has a group of comedic actors at the top of their game, a clear lineage to *Saturday Night Live* and a certain green ghost with a huge appetite. And it's received the blessing of the team behind the '84 classic. Not that it's been an easy journey to get to this point, as we were told in great detail by Paul Feig and the members of the latest spook-hunting quartet, starting on p.56. But that's not all. We also have original writer and star Dan Aykroyd recounting his life as a Ghostbuster, from his childhood fascination with the supernatural to the latest film, in which he appears as a brand-new character. (See... told you it had his blessing.)

There are many triumphant returns in this month's issue. Shane Black is directing again with *The Nice Guys*, and he talks us through his varied career. Twenty-five years on from *The Silence Of The Lambs*, Jodie Foster speaks up about why Clarice Starling is such an important and enduring character. And, perhaps most excitingly of all, Captain America is back in MCU dust-up *Civil War* — event cinema at its very best. SPOILER, but... we loved it. You can read just how much on p.40.

Is there a better feeling than when a film you really, really want to be good completely delivers on its promise? If there is, I can't think what it might be.

Terri.

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"It does taste like sick. If sick is really tasty."

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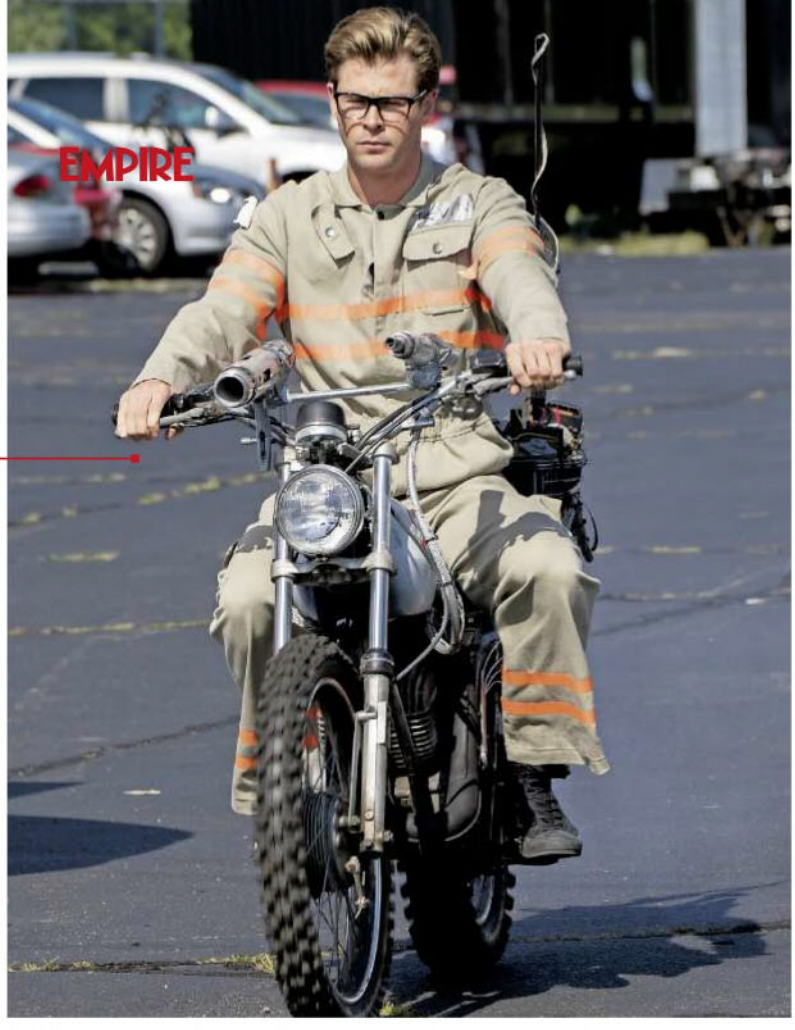
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Clockwise from above: *Ghostbusters*' token male Chris Hemsworth, on the Ecto-2; Uh-oh, *The Hateful Eight*'s Jennifer Jason Leigh's been at the ketchup again!; Jiang Wen gets rebellious in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

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PAUL STRAND

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Angus Peter MacIntyre, South Uist, Hebrides, 1954, Paul Strand © Aperture Foundation / Victoria and Albert Museum, London

STAR TREK

EDITED *by* CHRIS HEWITT





ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

OUT OF DARKNESS

STAR TREK BEYOND HERALDS THE FRANCHISE'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

SET PHASERS TO party. *Star Trek* is turning 50, and it's doing so in style with *Star Trek Beyond*. It's the third *Trek* film to explore strange new worlds with the rebooted cast, and it might once again change the status quo. "It was important to really deconstruct the idea of *Star Trek*, the idea of the Federation, and why it's special," says new director Justin Lin. "We'll be poking at a lot of different things."

Following their brush with Khan in *Star Trek Into Darkness*, James T. Kirk (Chris Pine) and the crew of the Enterprise have spent two years nosing around the final frontier, and have come to rest at a Federation outpost. There they encounter Idris Elba's alien nutjob, Krall, who rains fire and scorn on the Federation's happy-clappy ways.

"We're gathering a great community within the galaxy, but to what end?" says Simon Pegg, who co-wrote the screenplay as well as playing Scotty. "What's the point of it all?"

Lin, who takes over from J. J. Abrams, turned *Fast & Furious* into a mega-franchise. That doesn't mean his *Trek* will be all rocket-fuelled ridiculousness. "I came from the indie world and my approach has always been [story first]," he says. "This is no different." But with the trailer promising an explosive moment for the Enterprise, this should be a 50th birthday party to remember. **OLLY RICHARDS**

***STAR TREK BEYOND* IS OUT ON JULY 22.**



REPORT

LET THE ROGUE ONE IN

GARETH EDWARDS' *STAR WARS* SPIN-OFF LAUNCHES

BLACK-CLAD stormtroopers staring impassively as something burns in the background. AT-ATs clomping around on a tropical beach. And not a lightsaber in sight. Gareth Edwards' *Rogue One* is *Star Wars*, alright, but viewed from a whole new angle.

We've known for some time that the first in the *Star Wars Story* anthology, which will fill in the blanks around the Skywalker-focused *Episodes*, would centre on the Rebel mission to steal the plans to the first Death Star, and that it would be more of a war movie than any *Star Wars* yet. When the movie's stunning first trailer hit in early April, it was a surprising and pleasing mix of classic references (not one, but two Gonk droids) and things we haven't seen in *Star Wars* before.

Although we know, broadly speaking, that the Rebel's scheme to half-inch the plans proves successful, we know little else. The trailer confirms that Felicity Jones' character is called Jyn Erso, a badass loner who can take out a squad of stormtroopers in a blink, but all other character names remain elusive, including Diego Luna's Rebel captain and Ben Mendelsohn's Imperial villain, wearing a uniform that may mark him as a Grand Admiral. But that didn't stop the speculation — is Jyn Erso the mother of *The Force Awakens*' Rey? Is Donnie Yen's robed fighter blind? Does one shot, of a black-clad figure kneeling in a room containing Imperial guards, suggest the presence of Darth Vader and the Emperor? Was one Death Star corridor scene filmed in Canary Wharf Tube station?

The answer to the last question, amazingly, is yes. The rest will have to wait for December. Unless we put a team together and break into Lucasfilm HQ to find the *Rogue One* plans... **CHRIS HEWITT**

***ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY* IS OUT ON DECEMBER 16.**

Felicity Jones as Jyn Erso, undercover among the Empire forces.









1 Ben Mendelsohn in what looks like the uniform of a Grand Admiral.
2 AT-ATs run amok in the tropics.
3 Forest Whitaker as a battle-scarred veteran, we're guessing.
4 Donnie Yen faces down blasters, with a stick.

THIS MONTH IN *STAR WARS*



1

CONFIRMED

The official announcement of filming for *Episode VIII* included Lupita Nyong'o's name on the cast list, so we never doubted that Maz Kanata would be bringing her funky goggles and centuries-old wisdom back to the galaxy. And it was confirmed when Rian Johnson posted a shot of Kanata on monitors on the *Episode VIII* set. Wonder if she still has her eye on Chewie…

2

REVEALED

The second season of hit animated show *Star Wars Rebels* came to a thrilling conclusion with a one-hour episode that held shocking revelations, appearances from Darths Maul and Vader (the latter voiced by James Earl Jones), and the promise next year will tie in more closely with the films.

3

MUCH MISSED

Erik Bauersfeld, the man behind the voice of Admiral Ackbar — and therefore "It's a trap!", one of the most iconic *Star Wars* lines — passed away in early April at the age of 93. He also provided the voice of another *Return Of The Jedi* icon — Jabba The Hutt's right-hand Twi'lek, Bib Fortuna — and returned to voice Ackbar in *The Force Awakens*.

ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH TRAVELS TO ANOTHER DIMENSION IN *DOCTOR STRANGE*

"IT'S A VERY different feel, different hero and different set of circumstances to what we've seen before," says Benedict Cumberbatch, star of Marvel's forthcoming magical mystery tour *Doctor Strange*. "It's another moment during Marvel's evolution."

Back in the '60s and '70s, *Doctor Strange* was the hippies' favourite. Dr. Stephen Strange, an arrogant Manhattan neurosurgeon who travels to the Himalayas to recover from a career-ending accident and ends up as the Sorcerer Supreme, opened the door to Marvel's most psychedelic adventures. Under the tutelage of Tilda Swinton's Ancient One, Cumberbatch's tormented hero learns magic and discovers hidden parallel dimensions. This multiverse was teased at the end of *Ant-Man,* but *Doctor Strange* goes the whole nine yards, with major ramifications for all of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The Ancient One will teach Strange and, through him, the audience about the multiverse. "[It has] many dimensions," says Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige, "some of which are mindbending, some scary, all of which need to be kept at bay, lest they come into our dimension."

Director Scott Derrickson, a *Strange*-lover since childhood, promises retina-popping vistas true to the cosmic visions of the comic's creator, Steve Ditko. "We felt free to go as far as we could imagine, so we're doing a lot of things that I think have not been done before," says Derrickson. "Once we'd crossed a certain line we just kept going."

DORIAN LYNSKEY

***DOCTOR STRANGE* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 28.**



BEST OF TIMES/WORST OF TIMES

SAM NEILL

THE KIWI LEGEND LOVED BEING A KING, BUT HATED BEING BOND





PIECE OF DIRECTION

On *Dean Spanley*, a scene with Peter O'Toole took three days to shoot. It was me talking and I was terribly nervous. I said, "Peter, I'm sorry, you've had to listen to this crap for three days." He said, "Dear boy, I'm enchanted." I thought, "I'll be okay now."

On *Possession*, there's a scene where I slap Isabelle Adjani and (*director*) Andrzej Zulawski said, "You just have to slap her." I said, "I can't hit a woman." He said, "You've got to do it," and Isabelle said, "You've got to do it." I was in tears afterwards.

AUDITION



I've hardly done any auditions but I did audition for *Pretty Woman*. I thought I was pretty good, but obviously not good enough! It was fun to have a day opposite Julia Roberts. She was a gas, larger than life.



When my agent bullied me into doing a James Bond audition. One of the worst days of my life. I didn't want to be there, and I was so uncomfortable all day. There was nothing good about the day at all.

LOCATION

I did a film with Wim Wenders, *Until The End Of The World*, in winter in the centre of Australia. I'd shot in Australia before in mid-summer and it was unbearable, but in winter it was extraordinary. I loved it.

I think the wettest and coldest I've been was on *Jurassic Park III*. We were on a boat about to be eaten by a dinosaur, with these immense rain machines. They bucket down 50 times harder than any natural rain, so we were so cold. All for the art.

COSTUME



Restoration, where I played Charles II. (*Costume designer*) Jim Acheson was a perfectionist — he got an Oscar. Every time I emerged I'd be underneath at least ten layers, right down to the underwear of the period.



When we did *Event Horizon*, I ended up as a weird monster, covered in prosthetics. Basically naked, with a weird pouch where my genitals had been torn away. We were shooting at Pinewood in mid-winter. It was wet, cold and horrible.

MOMENT

A couple of weeks ago I was at Sundance with a little New Zealand film called *Hunt For The Wilderpeople*. When we walked on stage, we got a standing ovation. I thought, "What a wonderful thing that is!" Completely surprising. It's a moment you don't often have.



It wasn't fun when the FIFA film (*2014's United Passions*) was released in the same week Sepp Blatter was accused of wrongdoing. But it was a film I enjoyed doing. CHRIS HEWITT

***THE DAUGHTER* IS OUT ON MAY 20.**

THINGS WE'VE LEARNED



Ian McKellen has made a Shakespeare app for your iPad. Sadly, it's not called Angry Bards, but Heuristic Shakespeare.



Dexter Fletcher may be the voice of the McDonald's ads, but he doesn't get free meals. There's no justice.



Alfie Allen — Theon Greyjoy/Reek in *Game Of Thrones* — is quite gracious if you happen to spill his pint. Sorry, Alfie.



The original title of Don Cheadle's Miles Davis biopic, *Miles Ahead*, was *Kill The Trumpet Player Vol. 1*. We prefer that one, actually.



A new collection of Star Wars timepieces
and cuff links by Devon. © Lucasfilm Ltd.

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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

THAT'S BRENTERTAINMENT

INSIDE THE RETURN OF RICKY GERVAIS' FRIEND, BOSS... MOVIE STAR?

ON THE STAGE OF a wood-panelled social club in north London, a band, Foregone Conclusion, is performing an excruciating reggae protest song, *Equality Street*, at an ironic student event called Aga Do Do's ("The Shittest Night Around" proclaims a banner). The singer, a goateed middle-aged man, launches into a ragga interlude in a cod-Jamaican accent while his bandmates look as if they wish the ground would swallow them up. David Brent lives.

The resurrection of the character that launched Ricky Gervais into the stratosphere was by no means a (sorry) foregone conclusion. After ending *The Office* on a high in 2003, Gervais left Britain's most embarrassing boss in limbo as he joined the comedy A-list. "To my mind, and I think to Ricky, Brent was dead and buried," says producer Charlie Hanson. "He felt he'd put that behind him and moved on." He'd played Brent in dribs and drabs since, including a cameo on the American version of *The Office*, but it was a 2013 appearance on *Comic Relief* that renewed his interest in the character. "He was having so much fun," says Hanson. "That's when it struck me that Brent's not dead."

Ricky Gervais as David Brent, ready to hit the Freelove Freeway with his new band.

For Gervais, it was perhaps simpler. Brent was never too far away. "In any situation, I know what to say as him," says Gervais, who is prone to slipping seamlessly into Brentian monologues. "I always have. Often the first thing you say is the funniest thing because he's literal. He says what he sees."

The big question for Gervais, who also writes and directs, was what would Brent be doing now? Because *The Office* ended with the disintegration of Wernham Hogg's unhappy family, a reunion with Tim, Dawn, Gareth and the rest was out of the question. So *Life On The Road* finds Brent several rungs down the career ladder, working



as a junior travelling salesman, while mounting one last quixotic bid for pop stardom. A documentary crew follows him on a self-funded national tour with a band of sceptical session musicians and his protégé Dom, played by the rapper Doc Brown. The aim is to be hilarious — the band and crew keep cracking up at Gervais' ad-libs — but heartbreaking, too. *Life On The Road* is a *This Is Spinal Tap* for the era of YouTube and *Britain's Got Talent*, when dreamers like Brent can convince themselves that fame is within reach. "People think, well, Susan Boyle," says Gervais. "Yeah, but what about the other 500 back in the shoe shop? There's something nice about, 'Don't give up your dreams,' but there's also something tragic. How long do you keep going?"

Intriguingly, Brent is actually a competent singer and songwriter. How that will play into the plot of *Life On The Road* is anyone's guess, but an album of Brent's songs — featuring Coldplay's Chris Martin and Razorlight's Andy Burrows — will accompany the movie. If Brent doesn't show up on this year's *Strictly* and throw some serious shapes, we'll be disappointed. **DORIAN LYNSKEY**

***DAVID BRENT: LIFE ON THE ROAD* IS OUT ON AUGUST 19.**

FROM SLOUGH TO NOW

HOW THE OTHER *OFFICE* STARS HAVE FARED POST-WERNHAM HOGG



MARTIN FREEMAN

Arguably more successful than Gervais, Freeman notched up a hit TV show (*Sherlock*), a run on stage as Richard III and three huge *Hobbit* films. Next he's got *Captain America: Civil War*, and a recurring role in the Marvel Universe. Not bad, Tim.



MACKENZIE CROOK

The former Gareth Keenan has shown up the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* series, and starred in TV comedies *Yonderland* and *The Detectorists*. He also became the 783rd British actor to be killed on *Game Of Thrones*.



STEPHEN MERCHANT

The Office's other co-creator wrote and directed *Cemetery Junction*, *Extras* and *Life's Too Short* with Gervais, but recently went solo with short-lived HBO show *Hello Ladies*. He's also an executive producer on US hit *Lip Sync Battle*.



LUCY DAVIS

Hollywood beckoned for receptionist Dawn. Davis — the daughter of Jasper Carrott — has cropped up on the likes of *Studio 60 On The Sunset Strip*, *Maron* and *NCIS*, and she'll appear next year in *Wonder Woman*.



EWEN MACINTOSH

There's more to the Welsh actor than eating a Scotch egg. Radio sitcom *Cabin Pressure*, theatre stints and *Celebrity Mastermind* have kept him busy. *Twin Peaks* was his specialist subject. He came second.



RALPH INESON

Best known as gravel-voiced salesman Finchy, Ineson has recorded a thousand ad voiceovers since *The Office*. He also got into a memorable dust-up with demonic goat Black Phillip in recent horror film *The Witch*.



INTERVIEW

CARPENTER'S GREATEST HITS

THE HORROR MAESTRO TALKS ABOUT HIS WORLD TOUR

ILLUSTRATION **BILL McCONKEY**

PICTURE THE scene. It's October 31. You're in a packed London venue. An old man, who doesn't look anything like a music star, walks on stage, sits down at a keyboard, and starts playing a familiar melody: the theme from *Halloween*. The crowd goes wild. Welcome to John Carpenter's World Tour.

'Musician goes on tour' is not usually worthy of note. But when that musician is Carpenter, the great director who also happened to compose some of the most iconic scores of the '70s and '80s, it's time to get excited. Well, some of us are excited. "It's terrifying," laughs Carpenter. "But to get to do this late in my life, that's just sensational."

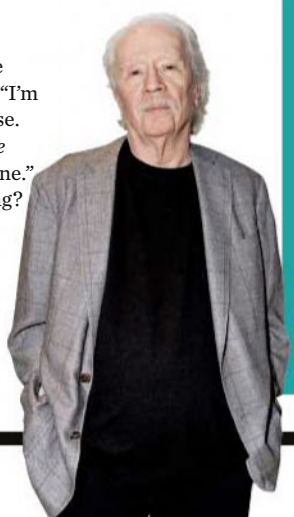
Of late, the 68 year-old Carpenter has been turning the passion for music that fuelled his soundtracks (*Halloween, The Fog, Assault On Precinct 13, Escape From New York* and more) into a full-time career, with the release of two albums: last year's *John Carpenter's Lost Themes* and its sequel, this year's *Lost Themes II*. And there's no better way for a musician to support albums than by going on tour, which is exactly what Carpenter and his six-piece band are doing, starting off in Denmark at the end of May and finishing up with that nicely timed gig in London.

"The show we're going to do is a career retrospective of my movie music, and the best stuff from the albums," he says. "It's been fun thinking about what the audience would like to hear, and what we will sound good playing."

Carpenter won't be drawn on the set-list, but he does confirm one thing: "I'm even going to do stuff I didn't compose. I'm going to play the main title to *The Thing* — and that was Ennio Morricone." And will we get to hear Carpenter sing? "No, I think we'll be an instrumental group," he admits. "But I think it'll be a good show. Hey, everything is good. Every day I'm above ground is a good day..." **CHRIS HEWITT**

THEOFFICIALJOHNCARPENTER.COM

Above: The John Carpenter All-Stars band we'd like to see. Performing *Starman*, naturally. **Below:** The great man himself.



• GETTY

Empire's Dream Set-list

1. ***Main Title*** (from *Assault On Precinct 13*)
2. ***Main Title*** (from *Escape From New York*)
3. ***Last Sunrise*** (from *Lost Themes II*)
4. ***Show Me*** (from *Christine*)
5. ***Theme From The Fog***
6. ***The Duke Arrives/Barricade*** (from *Escape From New York*)
7. ***Julie*** (from *Assault On Precinct 13*)
8. ***Starman***
9. ***Night*** (from *Lost Themes*)
10. ***Eternity*** (from *The Thing*)
11. ***They Live Main Theme***
12. ***Darkness Falls*** (from *Prince Of Darkness*)
13. ***Big Trouble In Little China*** (ft. Nick Castle)
14. ***Halloween II Theme***
15. ***Silver Shamrock*** (from *Halloween III*)
16. ***Theme From Halloween*** (from *Halloween*)

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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

CHARIOT OF FIRE

HIDE YOUR OSCARS, *BEN-HUR* IS BACK

THERE ARE FEW sequences in cinema history as spectacular as the chariot race from 1959's *Ben-Hur*. Remaking it seems like an act of folly, but Timur Bekmambetov, the brave soul who's giving it a go with the new *Ben-Hur*, has an ace up his sleeve. And, surprisingly, it's not just a CG ace. "Our technology is now far away from what they had previously," the Russian-Kazakh director tells *Empire*, "and the rigs we have are unbelievable. The goal for me is to shoot these action scenes so realistically that the audience feels that they're in the chariot, driving."

Empire bears witness to the filmmaker's ambition, from the stands of a newly constructed Circus Maximus built at Rome's Cinecittà Studios. The story's two great rivals, Judah Ben-Hur (Jack Huston) and Messala (Toby Kebbell) snap and snarl as their racing rigs, with super-small wheels, are dragged behind camera trucks, while hundreds of extras clap and cheer in the stands. Later on, real horses replace the trucks. "And these chariots have got no suspension, no brakes," continues Bekmambetov. "We have eight drivers, 24 horses, all running together. The dust and shit flies everywhere. It is scary."

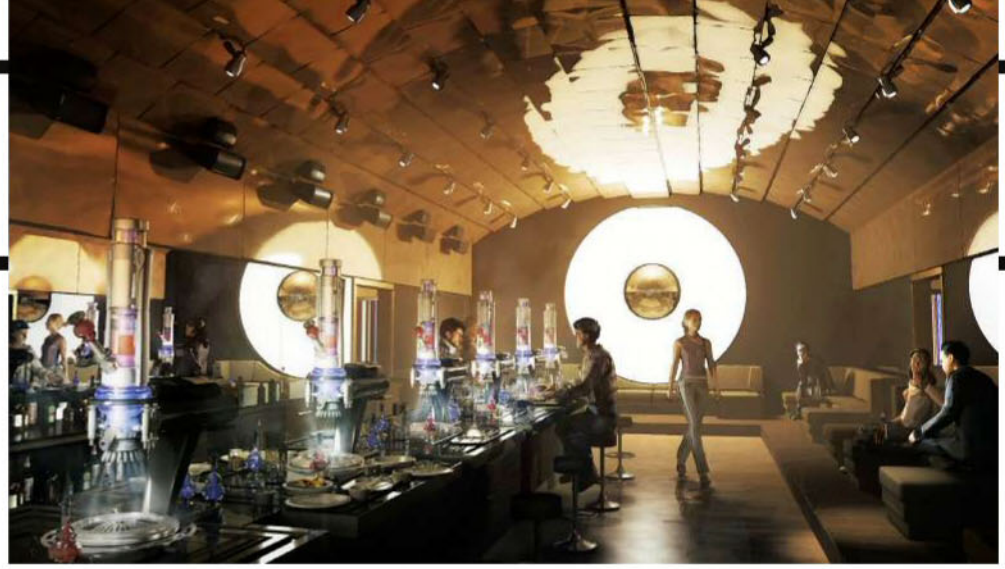
The '59 *Ben-Hur*, the first film to win 11 Oscars, has been remade before (Heston voiced a 2003 animation), but filling epic sandals isn't easy. "The last film was this giant, so you don't want to make a crappy movie," says Huston. "You want to make something special. I feel we're doing that." The race is on. WILL LAWRENCE

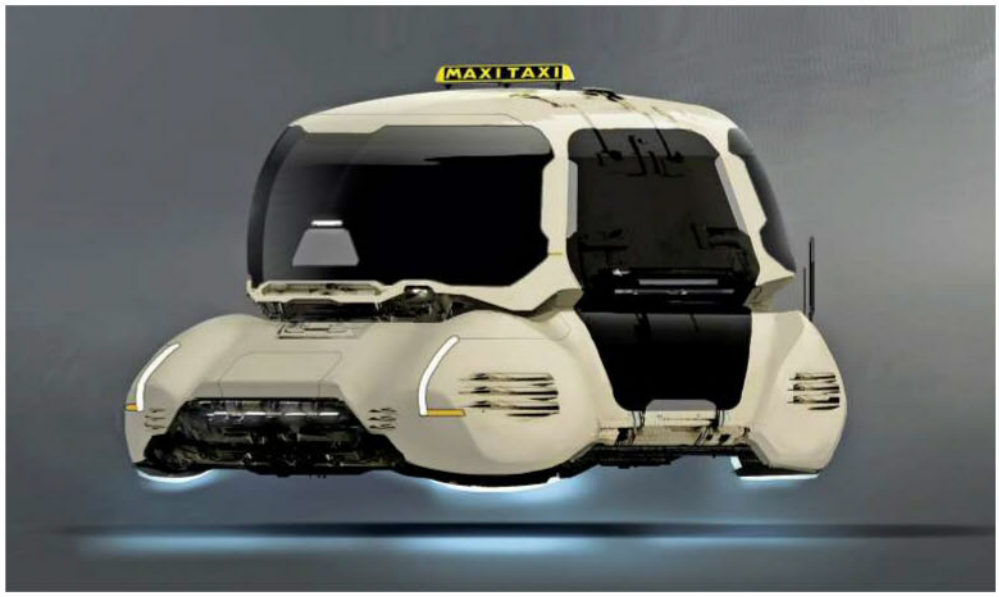
***BEN-HUR* IS OUT ON AUGUST 26.**

FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

MUTE WITNESS

DUNCAN JONES SPEAKS UP ABOUT HIS POST-*WARCRAFT* MOVIE





Top: A look at a bar, perhaps the one where Leo works. **Above:** A floating taxicab. **Right:** An artist's impression of a future Berlin.

SHORTLY AFTER *Moon* made his name as a director, Duncan Jones announced plans to make dark sci-fi thriller *Mute*. But 2011's *Source Code* got in the way, and then he devoted years to making fantasy epic *Warcraft*. But with that movie finally set for release (turn to p.98 for more), Jones is ready to turn up the volume on *Mute*. We spoke to him and his producing partner, Stuart Fenegan, for the first word on the film and a look at this stunning concept art.

What's the basic story of *Mute*?

JONES: It's the story of Leo, who's mute due to a childhood accident. He's looking for a missing person in mid-21st century Berlin — the Casablanca of the future.

Why set it in the future?

JONES: Because Leo's mute, in a contemporary setting it plays out one way. But in a future setting, where there is so much technology, it's a different dynamic.

The original script was set in the present day, wasn't it?

JONES: Yes, and in London, but then over the years I had some big, leaping ideas about what would make the film actually much weirder and darker. So we future-fied it.

Why have you cast Alexander Skarsgård as Leo?

JONES: I think he'll do a terrific job. Leo is a character who doesn't talk, so much of the communication is going to be about the nuances of the performance and where I put the camera to pick them up. But it's also a three-hander. The other two characters are a pair of buddies who are incredibly talkative, very loquacious and witty. You're bounced between their two stories — one guy who's silent, and the other two who are babbling all the time. So I think it has a nice balance to it.

You wanted to make this your first film, didn't you?

JONES: Yeah. It was supposed to be an incredibly low budget film that we would somehow scrape together. So Stuart and I started sending it out to people. We sent it out to Sam Rockwell. He didn't want to play the role I wanted him to play. He wanted to play the lead, which was never gonna work. Because physically he was not the size I needed.

FENEGAN: (*Laughs*) The script calls Leo "a human wrecking ball of a man"!

JONES: But at that meeting, it turned out Sam and I were both into the same kind of sci-fi, so I went off and wrote *Moon*. So *Mute* sat on a back-burner, and to be honest, I'm incredibly glad it didn't happen back then, because the script has evolved substantially. I learned an awful lot doing *Moon*, then *Source Code* and now *Warcraft*, and I've used those films to inform what I want this project to be. It's a thriller with a very weird tone.

How would you describe that tone?

JONES: Paul Schrader's *Hardcore* meets Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H*. It goes very dark, then it also goes very darkly funny. It's science-fiction urban, so it certainly owes some of its influence to *Blade Runner*. But in a way, the references to *Blade Runner* are more superficial.

Will it be a big production?

JONES: Well, we are going to be shooting in Berlin. During the 1970s, with so much of the city still to rebuild, a lot of futurist architecture was put up. So, in being selective in choosing these places, it's a vista you haven't seen before.

FENEGAN: For an independent movie, it's huge and incredibly ambitious.

JONES: It's absolutely character-based. The two villains of the piece are what's kept me wanting to do it since day one. Those characters are unique. You have not seen a pair like this. DAMON WISE

MUTE IS OUT IN 2017.


FOREIGN DREAMS

LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND Billy Zane

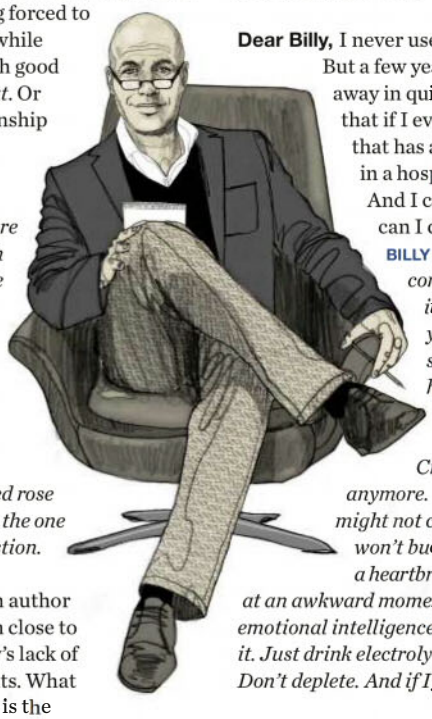
HE'S A COOL DUDE. HE'S TRYING TO HELP YOU (AND YES, THIS IS REAL)

ILLUSTRATION **ANDY MACGREGOR**

IT'S BACK! YOU LOVED THE advice column written by Hollywood's most unlikely Agony Uncle, Billy Zane, so much that we asked the great man back on a permanent basis. It's something of a titanic achievement.

Dear Billy, My fiancée and I have been together for a long time and we are very much in love. The only problem is that we have very different tastes in film. This means that I end up being forced to watch Noah Baumbach films, while having no opportunity to watch good movies, like *Star Wars*. Or *Heat*. Or *Predator*. How can this relationship keep going? And how can we balance our cinematic tastes? Yours, CCW.

BILLY SAYS: *I smell mash-up. Dare I say shuffle? I think Baumbach movies might benefit from some alien or cop intervention, and Predator, with those Milli Vanilli dreads, could use a hat sometimes. If variety is the spice of life, then your fiancée sounds like she needs some cayenne. That said, you better perfect your appetite for crushed rose petal, petal. Wait. Why are you the one to acquiesce? Sorry. Stupid question.*



Dear Billy, I've wanted to be an author since I was eight. However, I'm close to giving up because of my family's lack of support and negative comments. What can I do to persuade them this is the career for me? And how do I convince them to put aside their judgements and read my work? CG

BILLY SAYS: *Is there anyone else whose opinion you trust outside of the house, who could read something and give you their opinion, if that's what you crave? Or is it really audience you desire? The issue isn't writing, I venture, CG. It's support. What is your rival in the household? Is it a TV? A computer or phone? No-one can tear their eyes from their screens? If so, don't take it personally. Just change your delivery system. Read your own writing on video and send them all a file, or bounce it to the TV. If they still don't give a toss, consider it a gift. Great writers aren't born of coddling and ease. Ask any balladeer. You think they could create great art without their suffering? Some can. I thrive on joy. But I can't deny the motivational effects a little pain may have. And this is where the boy or girl of your dreams comes in, because they will be anything but that crew at home — build you up, and inspire that other masterpiece. Just give your family a chance to fulfill their potential by seeing the error of their ways, and you as a talent through your friends' eyes. Then write about it. Just wait until THAT opus!*

Dear Billy, I never used to cry at movies. Ever. But a few years ago, my parents passed away in quick succession and now I find that if I ever watch a movie or TV show that has a scene where someone dies in a hospital, the floodgates open. And I can't seem to stop it. What can I do? WP

BILLY SAYS: *Firstly, my sincere condolences. Nothing easy about it, no matter how well adjusted you are. So, bring it on. Play the sad songs. Watch the girl in the hospital movies. Purge. Cry until you're dry. Cry 'til you laugh at how much you cry. Cry because you can't cry anymore. Then remember this time. You might not cry like this again. Now you won't buckle during a sad film, or if a heartbreaking song comes over the radio at an awkward moment, when you need to inspire emotional intelligence and keep it together. So own it. Just drink electrolytes, and eat some extra sea salt. Don't deplete. And if I just made you cry, I'm sorry.*

Dear Billy, There's a girl at work that I'm really attracted to, but I just can't pluck up the courage to ask her out. The thought of rejection scares me, so I have to ask myself: what would Billy Zane do? KL

BILLY SAYS: *Perhaps you shouldn't, KL. Yeah, do nothing. Don't put yourself out there. Let someone else date her. Now, if you are not already speed-dialling her this instant, I don't know what to tell you, pal. Seize the day bed!*

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS FOR BILLY TO BILLYZANE@EMPIREMAGAZINE.COM. BILLY ZANE HAS DONATED HIS FEE FOR THIS COLUMN TO CHARITY.



He's either a replican, or a replicant. Either way, Dave Bautista has joined Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2*.



Cillian Murphy will re-team with Christopher Nolan for the fifth time on World War II epic *Dunkirk*. They must hate working together.



Shawn Levy will remake John Carpenter's '80s sci-fi, *Starman*. Please call it *Shawn Levy's John Carpenter's Starman*. Please.



Jared Leto has lined up his first post-Joker role — he'll star in *The Outsider*, about an American POW duking it out with the yakuza.


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BILLIONS* OF THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... *BILLIONS*

Paul Giamatti's prosecutor goes toe-to-toe with Damian Lewis' billionaire. Fight!

WHY SKY ATLANTIC'S LATEST IMPORT MIGHT BECOME YOUR NEW APPOINTMENT TV

1 Although it unfolds in surprising ways across its 12 episodes, *Billions* essentially sketches the conflict between Bobby Axelrod (Damian Lewis), a self-made hedge fund billionaire, and Chuck Roades (Paul Giamatti), a United States attorney looking to bring him down. "We think of billionaires as nation states, and United States attorneys as kings," says show co-creator Brian Koppelman. "The show really is about each guy trying to keep his kingdom in order while preparing to do battle with the other," adds fellow showrunner, David Levien.

2 The clash between 'Axe' and Roades is not a simple case of good versus evil, either. "Our goal was to present these guys as 360-degree characters," says Levien. "We didn't want to do a thing where it was the bad rich guy and the noble prosecutor. We were interested in playing with people's rooting interest."

3 Although the show takes place now, the financial crash of 2008 looms large. "It's really about how those events affected these people psychologically," says Koppelman. "You're watching the psychology unfold of the kind of people who were responsible for that stuff."

4 Influences include *Margin Call* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, as well as seminal TV shows like *The Sopranos* and *Mad Men*. But the showrunners have tried to create something unique. "It didn't feel like it was going to fit a template of something we'd seen before," says Levien.

5 Interestingly, while Adam McKay's *The Big Short* went to great lengths



Malin Akerman plays Bobby's wife Lara, here with cute kids.



Toby Leonard Moore is Roades' right-hand man, Bryan Connerty.

• ('OKAY, TEN)

to make the jargon of the financial world palatable for laymen, the showrunners decided to go the other route. There will be no Margot Robbie in a bubble bath here. "We learned this lesson on *Rounders*," says Koppelman of their 1998 Matt Damon poker movie. "We explain very little in that movie, especially the jargon. If you create an entertaining and engaging story with characters people connect to, you earn some leeway. But we love insular worlds and secret languages."

6 Koppelman and Levien, who've been writing/producing/directing partners for almost two decades, had the idea for the show about seven years ago. "David lives near a bunch of these guys in Greenwich, New York, and I live in Manhattan around this industry as well," says Koppelman. "We were fascinated by the kind of person who makes the kind of financial wagers these guys do."

7 Although they made their names principally as writers on the likes of *Rounders*, *Ocean's Thirteen* and *Solitary Man*, they knew this was destined for TV. "It would have been a tough one to tell in two hours," laughs Levien. "It lends itself to the way premium cable allows you to unfold complex characters."

8 The duo have directed movies — *Knockabout Guys* and *Solitary Man* — but they decided to operate purely as writers/producers on *Billions*. That prompted them to recruit big-name directors, including Neils Burger and LaBute, *Glengarry Glen Ross* director James Foley, and Karyn Kusama, who Koppelman says, "directed maybe our favourite episode of the season, episode ten. To find and work with directors we really admired was crucial to us."

9 The pair also reunited with their *Rounders* director John Dahl, for episode eight. "That is a fucking dream," says Koppelman. "To bring John Dahl back into our lives is just fantastic."

10 The first season was a hit in the States, which means Koppelman and Levien are currently plotting Season 2's twists and turns. "The thing doesn't rest solely on the construct of Chuck versus Axe," says Levien. "There are other places the show can go." **CHRIS HEWITT**

***BILLIONS* STARTS ON SKY ATLANTIC FROM MAY 30.**



ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

OUT OF THE BLOCKS

WHY JESSE OWENS BIOPIC *RACE* MAY ENTER THE OSCAR... YOU KNOW

ONE MAN'S BIG break is… another man's big break. John Boyega had long been attached to *Race*, the story of legendary sprinter Jesse Owens, but then got an offer he couldn't refuse from a galaxy far, far away. Exit Boyega, flanked by stormtroopers. Enter Stephan James, grabbing the role with both hands. "John was really up for it, but he couldn't turn down the opportunity he got," concedes the film's director, Stephen Hopkins. "I am not disappointed. Stephan is an extraordinary athlete as well as an actor. He is probably more like Jesse. He is a very Zen kind of character, which is how I see Jesse Owens."

Owens is one of the greatest athletes of all time, famous for winning four gold medals at the 1936 Olympics, where he was peerless in the 100m, 200m, long jump and 4x100m relay. But his achievements remain etched in legend for another reason. Those games were held in Berlin, three years before the outbreak of World War II, and Owen's victories enraged Adolf Hitler, who had designed the Games as a stage on which to show the world that his Aryan nation was unbeatable.

"I just yearned to tell the story of a real hero," Hopkins tells *Empire* on set, at the mighty Olympiastadion in Berlin, built specifically for those 1936 Games. "When I was growing up, the great heroes of our life were Muhammad Ali or Nelson Mandela. I was lucky enough to spend time with both of them and you realise that maverick people like that are so rare. So to come across this story of a real hero who never tried to be a hero, I found it very spiritual."

James says he sees some of the athlete in himself. "He was a very loving and caring person," he says. "I feel like I live life in that way as well, that I let my actions speak for me. He made a very big statement without even opening his mouth. He used his work ethic, his God-given talent and his love for running." The chase for Oscar glory is a marathon, not a sprint, but there's every chance that *Race*, and James, could be a serious contender. **WILL LAWRENCE**

***RACE* IS OUT ON JUNE 3.**

Above: Stephan James' Jesse Owens hurdles obstacles. **Below:** Director Stephen Hopkins.







FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

BREAKING FX GROUND

STEVEN SPIELBERG PUSHES THE CG ENVELOPE AGAIN WITH *THE BFG*

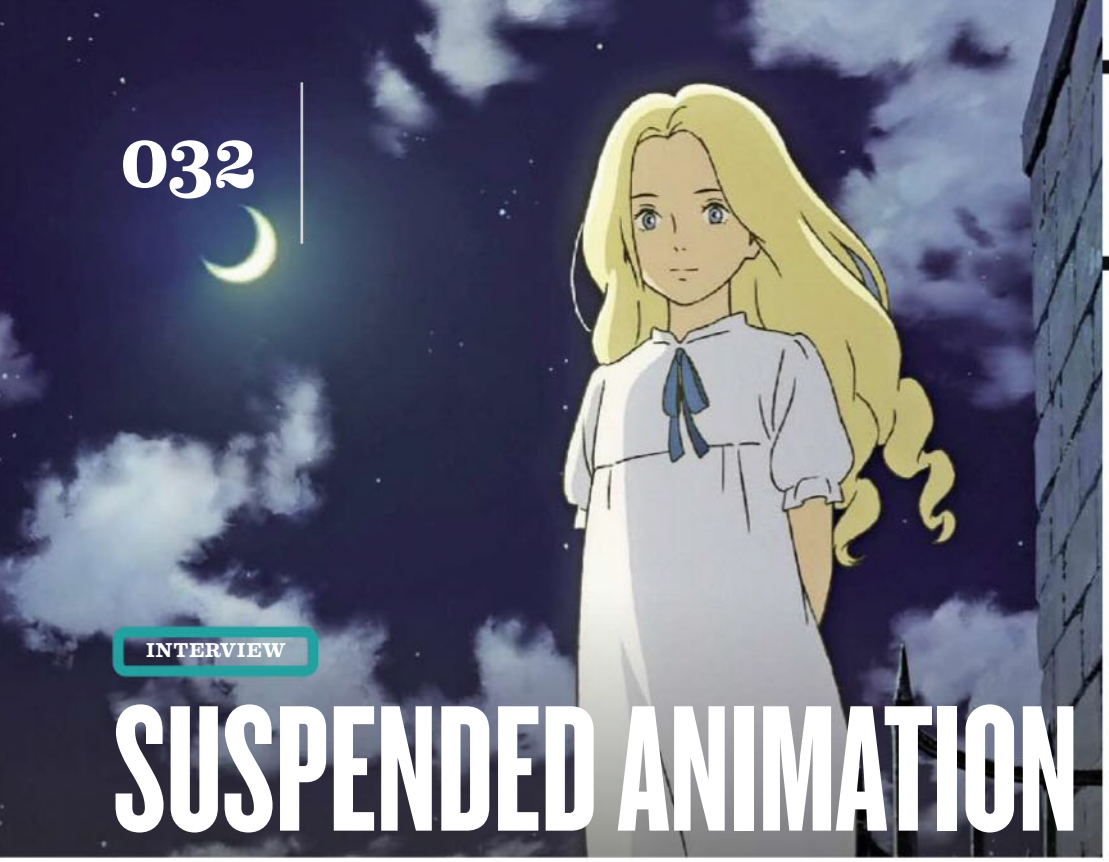
"IT'S A BIG JOB," SAYS Steven Spielberg, appropriately enough, about *The BFG*. "There are thousands of effects shots. I think it's the most ambitious motion capture of a character that any film has ever done." Just one look at Mark Rylance, working with Spielberg again so soon after bagging the Best Supporting Actor Oscar for *Bridge Of Spies*, confirms that. As the towering beanpole at the heart of Roald Dahl's classic 1982 children's book, this is Rylance as you've never seen him before. This is a Rylance big enough to give Frank Stallone, who famously railed against the British actor pipping his big brother Sly to that Oscar, pause for thought. This is a Rylance almost entirely composed of pixels.

The BFG — Big Friendly Giant if we're being formal — is squarely in Spielberg's sweet spot, using cutting-edge effects in the service of a small relationship picture. It starts with the giant doing something distinctly unfriendly by snatching young Sophie (Ruby Barnhill) from a London orphanage and whisking her off to Giant Country. But a fast friendship forms, meaning the emotional weight of the film relies on the believability of the VFX as much as the performances.

"Steven was very keen on having the actors in the same space, even though Mark Rylance would be 24 feet tall," says producer Frank Marshall. "A Simulcam enabled him to see on a monitor what it is going to look like. It's two separate cameras that put BFG and Sophie together in the same shot. It was a big leap forward in putting CG characters into the real world."

But it was not just the title character who gave Spielberg nightmares. For the director, the "toughest part" came with the creation of the phantasmagoric lands of Giant Country and Dream Country, where the dreams of the world are harvested. "We had to create everything from scratch," says Spielberg. "None of it is real... but it looks real." What does a real land of dreams look like? It's not long until we find out. IAN FREER

***THE BFG* IS OUT ON JULY 22.**



INTERVIEW

SUSPENDED ANIMATION

WITH *WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE*, IT SEEMS STUDIO GHIBLI IS NO MORE

SINCE HAYAO Miyazaki retired in 2013, Studio Ghibli, the Japanese animation house for which he made so many classics, looked as though it would continue without him. But with the release of Hiromasa Yonebayashi's Oscar-nominated *When Marnie Was There*, it would seem that this is it for the legendary studio. We spoke to Yonebayashi about being the man behind the last Studio Ghibli film.

Did you know, while making the movie, that it might be Studio Ghibli's last one? Yes, I had heard from producer Toshio Suzuki. The decision had been made to release the production staff by the end of 2014. But this wasn't a surprise for me because I had been told since I joined the studio that this was a possibility. I thought it was very much in line with the character of Studio Ghibli to compensate the production staff well and announce, "We will disband all together!"

So it's unlikely that Studio Ghibli will make another movie. Currently, Mr. Miyazaki is making a short film for the Ghibli Museum using CG techniques. Studio Ghibli is also involved in the production of a film by a foreign director. As most of the production staff have left the Studio, it seems to me that it would be difficult for the Studio to make feature-length films as in the past. I am now working away from Studio Ghibli, so I have no way of knowing what may happen in the future.



Above: Two shots from *When Marnie Was There*, the final full-length Studio Ghibli film. It's enough to make a Catbus cry. **Below:** Hiromasa Yonebayashi.

What does Studio Ghibli mean to you? The idea that we create films that are watched by children so we cannot make them in a slipshod manner, has been thoroughly ingrained in me.

What does the future hold for you? I must admit, when I first heard that Studio Ghibli was to dissolve its production department, I thought, "Now I'll be liberated from all the pressure of directing at Ghibli!" But right away I realised that, even so, I have to continue making films. Currently I am working with the producer for *Marnie*, Yoshiaki Nishimura, on a feature-length film. It should be a film enjoyable for all audiences, from children to grandparents, so please look forward to it. WILL LAWRENCE



***WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE* IS OUT ON JUNE 10.**

EMPIRE Live
FILM AND ENTERTAINMENT'S BIGGEST WEEKEND



GOING LIVE

EMPIRE IS HOSTING AT THE O2

Empire is putting on a live event. And we'd be honoured if you would join us.

Empire Live will be an epic celebration of cinema, spread over three days at The O2 Arena in London this September. There will be, in no particular order, previews of the hottest new films, guest appearances from some of the biggest names in movies, exclusive screenings, quizzes, and much, much more as the world's biggest movie magazine bursts out of print and into the real world. And to prove it, we'll be bringing you an in-person Pint Of Milk, while the *Empire* Podcast team will once again be taking to the stage for plenty of film-related fun.

The event takes place from September 23-25, and we're hugely excited about it. The only way we could be more excited is if Kevin James shows up on a Segway for a Paul Blart-athon.

FOR TICKET AVAILABILITY AND PRICING, GO TO EMPIRELIVE.COM.

• ALAMY, GETTY

"A MASTERPIECE" Peter Bradshaw, THE GUARDIAN

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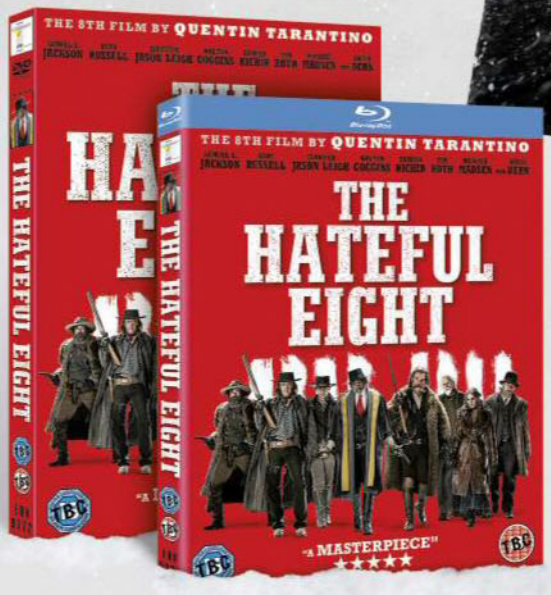
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★★★★★ THE GUARDIAN

★★★★★ THE SUNDAY PEOPLE



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ON-SET EXCLUSIVE

TEENAGE KICKS

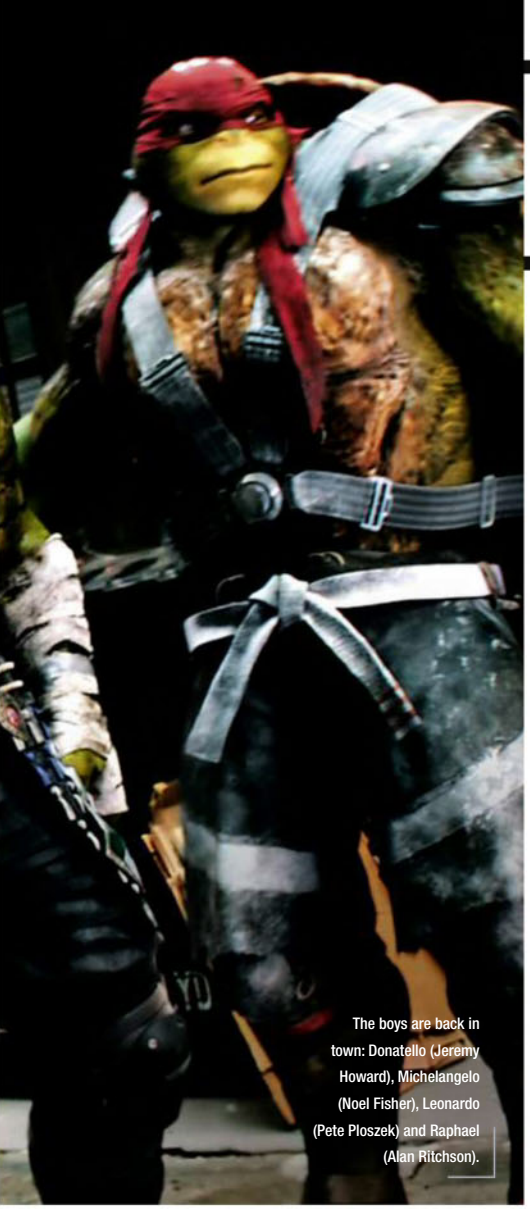
THE MUTANT TURTLES SURVIVE A CRITICAL MAULING TO STEP BACK OUT OF THE SHADOWS...

IF YOU'RE surprised that 2014's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* reboot has earned a sequel, that's okay: so are the filmmakers. "We were finding our way through that movie all the time we were making it," says producer Andrew Form. "Finding the tone and the design and the visual effects was very hard..." Even the decision about whether to split Shredder and Eric Sachs (William Fichtner) into two separate characters was only made in the edit suite.

Happily for all involved, it worked out, earning a not inconsiderable half-billion dollars at the worldwide box office. Energised by that success, it's a more confident Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello and Raphael who will step forward in *Out Of The Shadows*. Which is just as well, since they're facing a greatly increased line-up of the comics'



April O'Neil (Megan Fox) and Casey Jones (Stephen Amell) chase a ninja human.



The boys are back in town: Donatello (Jeremy Howard), Michelangelo (Noel Fisher), Leonardo (Pete Ploszek) and Raphael (Alan Ritchson).



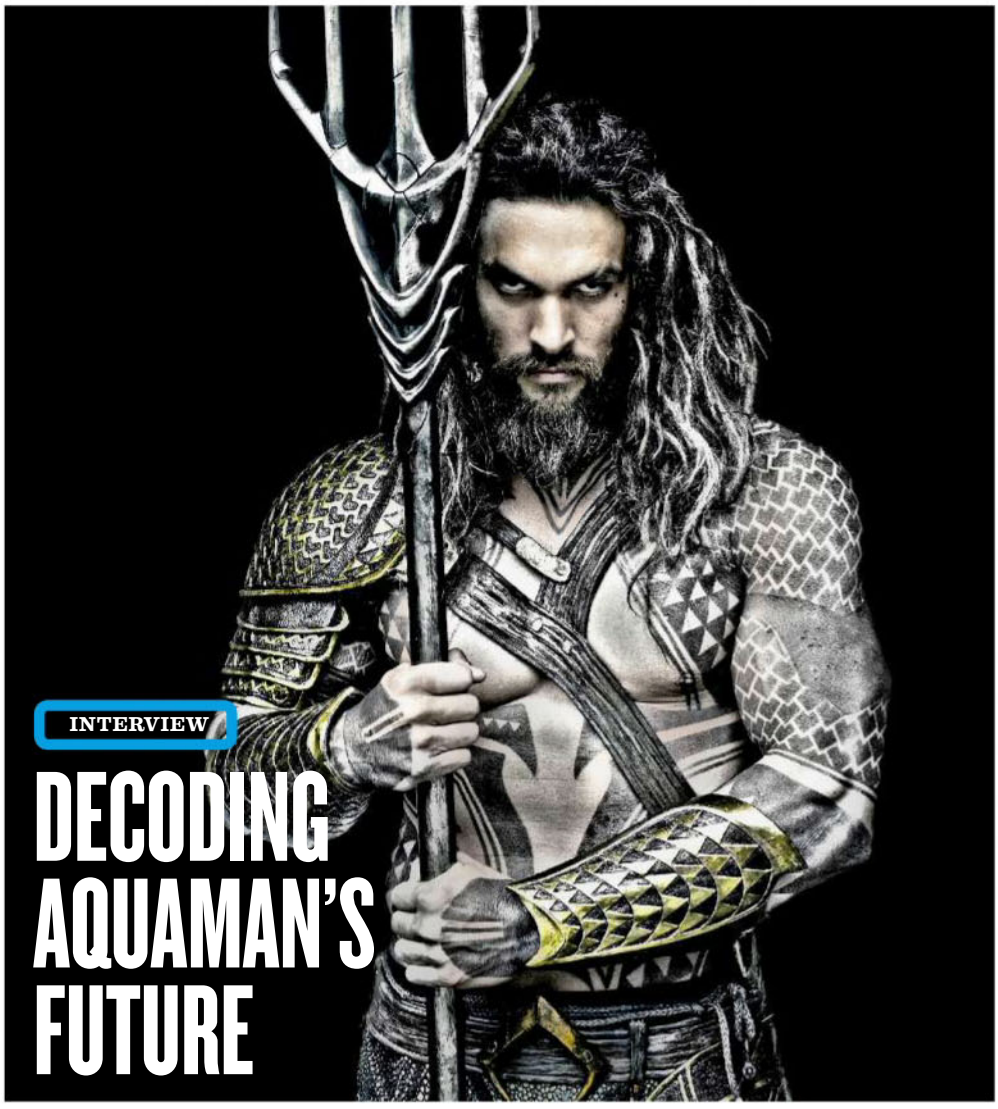
classic bad guys. "Krang is the über-villain," explains writer Josh Applebaum, referring to the squirmy alien warlord from Dimension X behind all the wrongdoings. "Shredder is carrying out Krang's directives; Bebop and Rocksteady (*a mutant warthog and rhino, respectively*) are the muscle who work for Shredder, and (*mad scientist*) Baxter Stockman is the brains. They're their own little Suicide Squad."

There's also an addition on the side of the good guys this time. Arrow's Stephen Amell has a blast as Casey Jones, the mask-wearing vigilante here re-imagined as a "nutbar corrections officer" dragged into the mayhem when his charges escape. "I learned how to fight with a hockey stick," beams Amell. "And got good at rollerblading again."

Megan Fox, returning as April O'Neil, insists, "This one's gonna be a lot lighter and more fun than the first time around. The action is bigger, and it's just a better situation. There's no way this isn't going to be a better movie."

OWEN WILLIAMS

***TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS* IS OUT ON MAY 30.**



INTERVIEW

DECODING AQUAMAN'S FUTURE

"LOOK AT MY MOVIES," SAYS DIRECTOR JAMES WAN

THE FUTURE OF THE DC Extended Universe isn't set, but *Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice* gave us a strong sense of what it's shaping up to be like — epic, dark and high on spectacle.

That little-discussed film also gave us an all-too-brief glimpse of the characters we're yet to meet properly on screen. And most intriguing of them all was Jason Momoa's Aquaman, caught on camera swimming in an underwater wreck, then punching the lens before swimming off like a torpedo. Signs are he won't be providing the comic relief in the Justice League line-up. That will fall to… erm… well, we'll get back to you on that.

Above: Jason Momoa as Aquaman.
Below: James Wan: a fan of horror and sartorial elegance.



But one of the successes of the Marvel Cinematic Universe is how the style of the films will change (sometimes dramatically) depending on the lead character. Is that something that will be mirrored in the DC series? We put the question to *Aquaman*'s director James Wan as he put the finishing touches to his latest film, *The Conjuring 2*.

"Will *Aquaman* be as dark as *Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice*?" says Wan aloud, repeating our question back to us. "Look at the sensibility of my movies, from *Fast & Furious 7* to the horror films. You can extract the kind of movie I might make of *Aquaman*." Which, to us, means slick action, expertly handled tension and an eye for innovation.

Sounds like a winner.

WILLIAM THOMAS

***THE CONJURING 2* IS OUT ON JUNE 17.**

JAMESON EMPIRE DONE IN 60 SECONDS



CHUCKLE VISION

This year's Done In 60 Seconds winner tells all

COLOSSI OF COMEDY they may be, but it's unlikely that Paul and Barry Chuckle — the Chuckle Brothers — will ever be featured in an Oscar acceptance speech. Unless, that is, Marc Coleman ever wins an Oscar. For he was the winner of this year's Jameson Empire Done In 60 Seconds, the short film competition that challenges you to remake any film you like, but with a running time of only one minute, with his unique reimagining of Brian Helgeland's *Legend* as a vehicle for the Chuckles. Featuring custard-pie fights, great gags, and "to me" and "to you" knuckle dusters, it was the unanimous choice of this year's DISS panel.

Congratulations on winning DISS 2016. Has it sunk in?
It hasn't. It still feels pretty mad. I'm over the moon. It's a cool thing to be a part of.

What does this mean to you?
A lot. I'm just a guy that's been playing with cameras since I was a teenager.

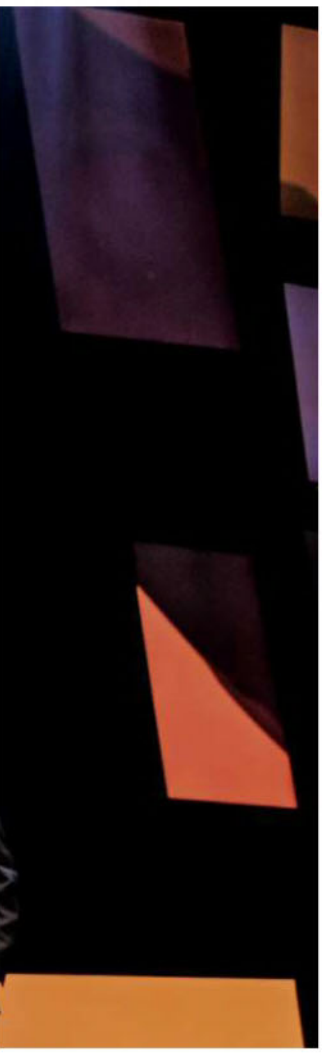
What did you do after you won?
We chatted to loads of super-nice people. We had a really nice chat with Corin Hardy about practical effects. That guy is awesome. I didn't get a chance to chat to Matt Damon, although I don't think he'd have got the Chuckle Brothers references.

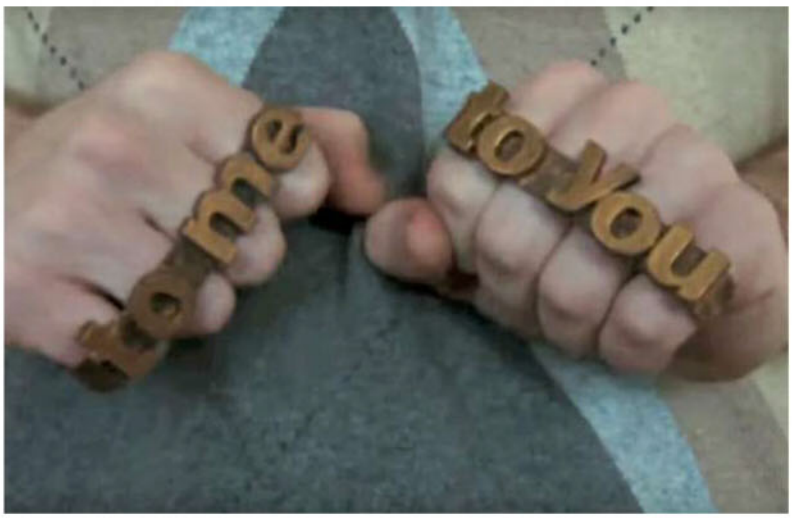
Was this the first time you'd entered?
This was the second. We entered last year with our take on *The Fault In Our Stars*. Ours was called *The Fault In Our Star Wars*. It was very weird.

Why did you enter? Do you harbour ambitions to be a director?
I entered because I loved the concept. It's fun. It's always been about getting some friends together, who have never stepped foot in front of a camera before and just seeing what happens. It's a great platform for new filmmakers for sure.

Why *Legend*? And indeed, why the Chuckle Brothers?
I think my thought process went, "Choose a serious film and make it silly." *Legend* seemed a great one to do as it was a good chance to do some split screen. Then I thought, "If you were going to cast some brothers to play the twins, who would be the worst casting choice of all time?" and for some reason, the Chuckle Brothers popped straight in [my head].

Above: Marc Coleman accepts his award alongside cameraman Marc Shuttle. **Top right:** Knuckle dusters, Chuckle-style. **Above right:** Marc Coleman and Marc Coleman as the 'legendary' siblings.







Who played Paul and Barry?
I played them both. The big thing around *Legend* was that both brothers were played by one man. I think I blew most of the tiny budget I had on charity-shop costumes and the fake nose. I lost count of the amount of times my girlfriend came home to find me sticking on a fake nose and covering myself in make-up. Luckily, she's very supportive.

Was the shooting process difficult?
Kind of, yeah. I probably gave myself way too many jobs. Playing both brothers was difficult in terms of continuity. It meant dressing up as Barry, doing the scene, then changing into Paul. It was a bit of a nightmare. But my camera man was awesome and helped direct those bits.

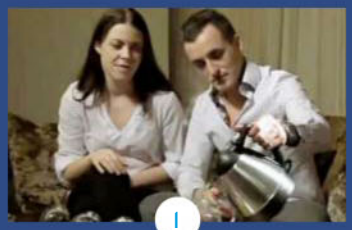
The film's soundtrack is overdubbed — why did you do that?
Simple answer, we didn't have any sound. We had on-board camera sound but most of the stuff was shot in noisy pubs and bars. So we re-recorded everything under a duvet with an iPhone. That's how all the pros do it, isn't it?

How difficult was it to nail the feel of *Legend* AND the Chuckle Brothers?
I always wanted to bring out the violence of *Legend* but water it down with slapstick. Hence the "to me", "to you" knuckle dusters. I think I definitely got the *ChuckleVision* element down. I'm not sure about the *Legend* side of things. Can you ask Brian Helgeland for me?

Have Paul and Barry seen it?
About an hour ago Barry sent me an email saying, "Well done, mate. I really enjoyed it." I'd love it if they'd be up for remaking *Legend* with them as the Krays. CHRIS HEWITT

TO SEE THE WINNING DISS ENTRY, GO TO WWW.JAMESONEMPIREDISS.COM.

THE FINALISTS



1

FIFTY SHADES OF TAE

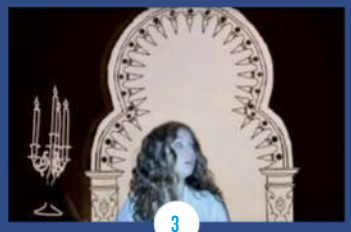
(IRELAND)
Martina Larkin &
Michael Hourigan
Like *Fifty Shades Of Grey*, but with the Irish national drink — yes, tea. You don't even see the PG Tips.



2

SCHINDLER'S LIST

(BULGARIA)
Petya Ivanova
Unusual, sombre and audacious take on Steven Spielberg's 1993 classic. Points for boldness.



3

CRIMSON PEAK

(POLAND)
Karolina Kunysz
Bizarre, impressionistic, one-woman version of Guillermo del Toro's Gothic romance. You'll feel like you're Hiddlestoned.



HOW MUCH IS A PINT OF MILK?

James McAvoy

PROFESSOR X? PROFESSOR UHT, MORE LIKE

PORTRAIT **ROBBIE FIMMANO/TRUNK ARCHIVE**

Who is the most famous person in your contacts? It's a toss-up, really, between Hugh (*Jackman*) and Jennifer (*Lawrence*).

Which one do you text most? Hugh.

How much is a pint of milk? Depends where you get it, doesn't it? I'd say Tescos is 45p, 50p, but then you go to a more upmarket supermarket and you're 80p to £1 for a pint.

When was the last time you cared about money? Fuck. All the fucking time, no matter how much I've made from *X-Men* which, thank you God, has sorted us out. I feel I'm really generous with what I've got if it's somebody that I love, but otherwise I'm quite tight.

On a scale of one to ten, how famous are you? I'd say six-and-a-half. That means people go, "You're that guy from that movie I like, but I don't remember your name." That happens quite a lot.

Can you move unmolested in public? Quite often. Although when the trailer for *Apocalypse* came out, that shafted that up. I was like, "Check me out being bald, nobody fucking recognises me." Then the trailer comes out and everyone's like, "Professor X, what's up?" I had to start growing my hair again.

Who were you in your first school play? A fucking chapter narrator in a primary school panto. All the other kids got to play parts. Honestly, all I got to do was come on, read off a piece of paper, and then walk off. That was it.

An alien lands on Earth and asks to see a James McAvoy double bill. What films do you choose? *Atonement* and *Filth*. They're so weirdly different, hopefully the aliens would go, "Wow, the same human being can do both those weird things? This race is clearly not just definable by one thing, therefore we won't destroy them because we think they're just violent maniacs. They're clearly capable of being selfless English people as well!"

What's the best thing about your hometown? Glasgow? Apart from the fact that my family is there, deep-fried everything. It's pretty good.

Have you ever embraced the Scottish cliché and deep-fried a Mars bar? I have! I did it posh, though, with filo pastry and a little bit of cream in there. You freeze it all and drop it into the deep fat fryer for 45 seconds. It's brilliant.

Do people quote your lines back at you? I get, "Mutant and proud," a bit, but that's not even one of my fucking lines!

When did you last walk out of a movie? Recently. It was during Oscar season. It was a very prominent, well-decorated film. I can't tell you what it is. I thought it was boring as shit.

Who was your first movie crush? Kim Cattrall. Who I know now as well, which is weird. "Aw, Kim, I'm so glad we're friends, but I still totally fancy you."

On a scale of one to ten, how hairy is your arse? Two-and-a-half. It's not that hairy. I'm really hairy on my legs, but it thins out in a male-pattern leg-balding way on my upper thighs. CHRIS HEWITT

***X-MEN: APOCALYPSE* IS OUT ON MAY 19.**

DID YOU KNOW?

- He's allergic to horses.
- His nickname is Floyd.
- He was a confectioner before switching to acting.



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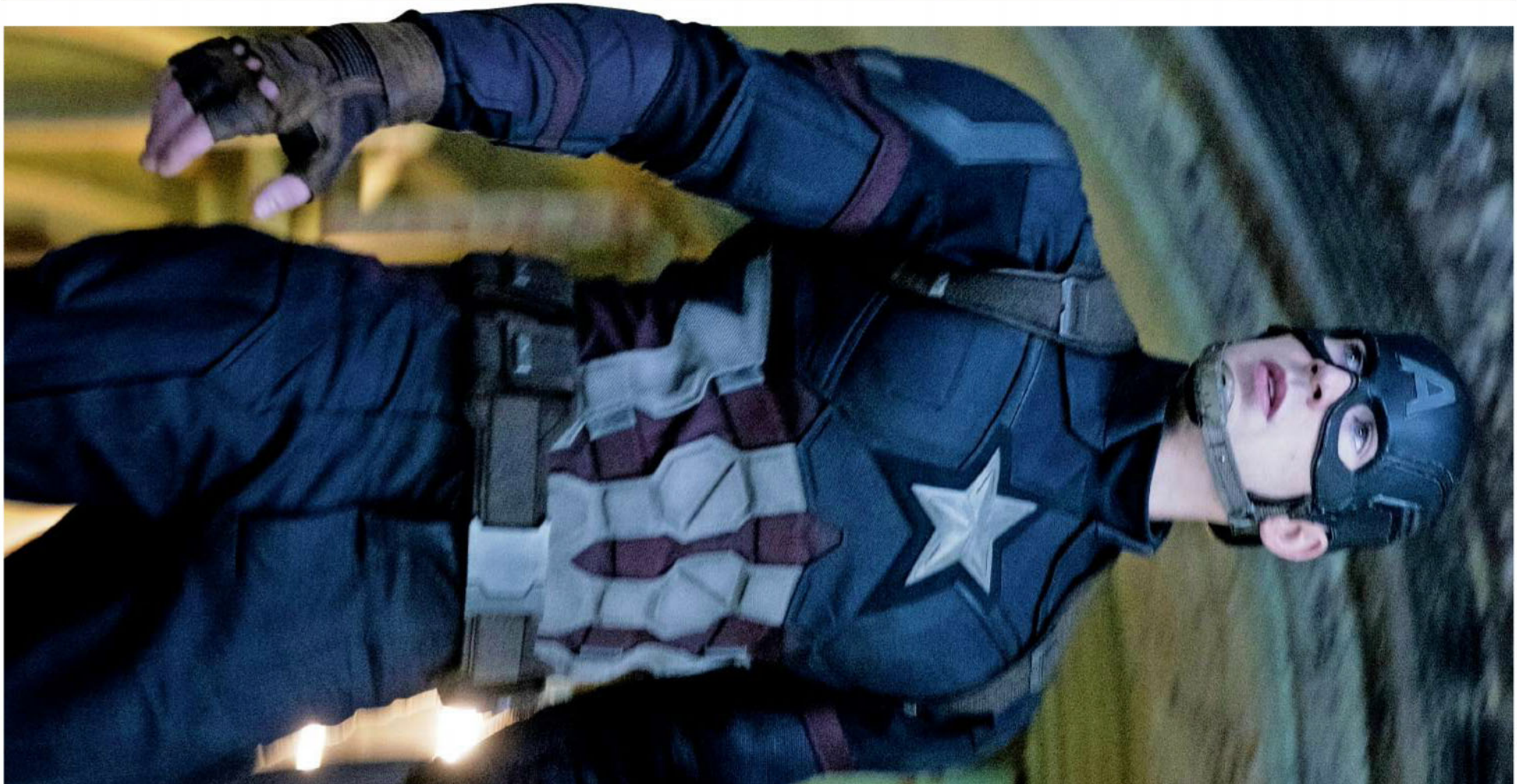
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IN CINEMAS

THE EMPIRE MOVIE GUIDE | UNMISSABLE ★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★ GOOD ★★★ POOR ★★ TRAGIC ★





Super-pals Captain America (Chris Evans) and Bucky (Sebastian Stan), side by side again.

Captain America: Civil War

★★★★★

OUT **APRIL 29** / CERT **TBC.** / **146 MINS.**

DIRECTORS Joe and Anthony Russo
CAST Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr., Sebastian Stan, Scarlett Johansson, Chadwick Boseman, Elizabeth Olsen, Anthony Mackie, Daniel Brühl

PLOT After Captain America sidekick-turned-assassin Bucky Barnes (Stan) resurfaces, tensions between Steve Rogers (Evans) and Tony Stark (Downey Jr.) turn into a full-on Avengers schism.

WHEN THE AVENGERS first assembled four years ago, it felt like a grand culmination, the ultimate Marvel superhero event: its Big Four characters united (well, eventually) against a colossal planetary threat. Since then, the studio's ever-expanding Cinematic Universe has delivered sequels of varying quality and introduced new heroes in stand-alone movies (well, as close to stand-alone as Marvel can ever get), but it's never quite matched the ensemble-balancing finesse and Earth-quaking-action scale of Joss Whedon's initial assembling. Certainly not in his clunkier, team-gathering follow up, *Age Of Ultron*. Until now.

Captain America: Civil War is the best Marvel Studios movie yet. There, we said it. First, and most importantly, it does what the best Marvel films do: juggling multiple characters so each is allowed its moment in a story that pushes forward the series' overall continuity, while also forming and concluding its own cogent plot. So here Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen) wrestles with the consequences of her immense power; Vision (Paul Bettany) starts getting to grips with being 'human'; Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) finds herself torn when the battle line is drawn; and supposed retiree Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner) just can't stay out of the fight. Even Paul Rudd's Ant-Man receives more than a tokenistic 'hey it's him!' cameo, and in spectacle terms at least, is given the film's biggest scene.

Then there are the new recruits: Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman,

playing it gravelly and furrow-browed), nimble protector of a secretive African nation who has his own beef with the Winter Soldier, aka Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan); and a quippy kid from Queens (Tom Holland) who crawls up walls in a red-and-blue outfit and can shoot webs at people. His introduction to the action is resoundingly joyous, the reboot the character truly deserves.

At its not-so-soft-and-gooey centre, though, is the friendship between Steve Rogers (Chris Evans) and Bucky, two war buddies out of time, one of them out of his mind. Stan remains, for the most part, as blank and frosty as he was in *The Winter Soldier*, allowing only the occasional warm glint of '40s sidekick Bucky. Evans, meanwhile, further hones a role he's effortlessly owned for five movies now, pushing Steve to impressive new depths and reminding us his straight arrow still has a dangerous edge.

The Steve/Bucky thread stretches back to the first *Captain America* — the heart of the film, it's what makes it work as *Cap Three*. But built around that is a bigger conflict that also makes the '*Avengers Two-And-A-Half*' billing valid.

Similar to the way Zack Snyder's DC-world reacted to Superman's ascension and the emergence of its "metahumans" — though here it is more lightly and elegantly handled — the world of the Avengers has had enough of these "enhanced" agents wreaking collateral havoc and decided, not unreasonably, to bring them to account. So US Secretary Of State Thaddeus Ross (William Hurt, reappearing for the first time since he was just a monster-chasing General in *The Incredible Hulk*) presents the Sokovia Accord, signed by 117 countries, which states the Avengers should be answerable to the United Nations. Wracked with guilt over his Ultron faux-pas, Tony Stark's all for it, and Robert Downey Jr. burdens the still occasionally glib hero with a weight-of-the-world weariness that is well matched by his own MCU mileage. But stubborn Steve, distrustful of the post-War world's version of 'authority', refuses to sign on the dotted line.

It's bold of writers Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely to place their title hero in the most obviously dubious position. If the Avengers don't answer to the UN, who *should* they answer to? And Steve's defence of Bucky is questionable: he may be his childhood friend, but now he's a lethal, robot-armed killing machine forever in danger of being reactivated. It's fair enough that he should be brought to heel, right? Then again, there are flaws in Tony's arguments, too, especially the problematic evidence on which he rests them. Who the audience should agree with is hardly a clear-cut matter.







Top: End of the Rhodey? Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) with his fallen comrade (Don Cheadle). **Middle:** Team Cap, assembled! **Bottom:** Spider-Man (Tom Holland) finally joins the MCU.

It's even bolder that the conflict at the film's heart doesn't pander to genre convention and become sidetracked by a grandstanding supervillain plot. And this is the second way *Civil War* earns our Greatest Marvel Yet accolade: by rising above the series' greatest weakness. Too often, all that snappy writing and slick action is undermined by flimsy big bads and formulaic final acts. Yet there is no Loki or Ultron (or, for that matter, Lex Luthor) equivalent this time. Not a whiff of Thanos, or any more of those forgettable Marvel sub-baddies with 'The' for a middle name. There is a meddling manipulator — of course there is — but, interestingly, his agenda is as blurred as Steve's and Tony's. Arguably just as sympathetic, too. Directors Joe and Anthony Russo don't just want to rocket your heart into your mouth with their action sequences, which have the tight choreography of a Greengrass *Bourne*, and the brutal flair of a Gareth Evans rumble; they want to keep your brain firmly engaged, too.

Who needs a villain when you have Steve and Tony? Both protagonists. Both antagonists. And drawing other power-people to their cause in surprising ways. The clashes go far beyond the set-up squabbles of *Avengers Assemble*. Or even that other big 2016 superhero showdown. Forget *Batman v Superman*. Here you get *Ant-Man v Spider-Man*, *Hawkeye v Black Widow*, *Scarlet Witch v Vision*, *The Winter Soldier v Black Panther* and (well, duh) *Captain America v Iron Man*, all rolled into one. And *that* is what you call the ultimate Marvel superhero event. **DAN JOLIN**

VERDICT Matching its blockbuster scale and spectacle with the smarts of a great, grown-up thriller, *Captain America: Civil War* is Marvel Studios' finest film yet. There. We said it again.

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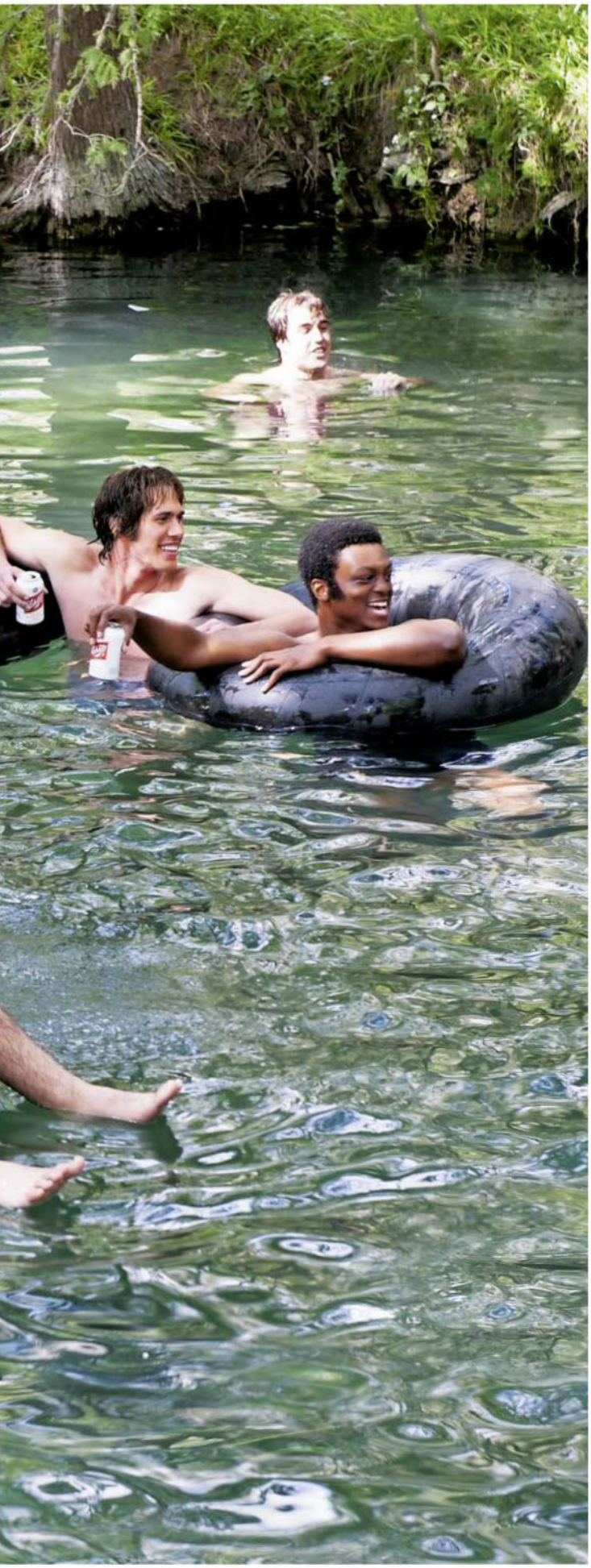
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Wait until they tried the Mad Tea Party Tea Cups.



Everybody Wants Some!!

★★★★

OUT **MAY 13** / CERT. **15** / **117 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Richard Linklater
CAST Blake Jenner, Glen Powell, Tyler Hoechlin, Zoey Deutch, Temple Baker

PLOT August, 1980. Baseball pitcher Jake (Jenner) arrives at his Texan college and spends the few days before classes begin bonding with his new teammates.

THERE ARE ONLY two rules for the college baseball players in Richard Linklater's "spiritual sequel" to *Dazed And Confused*. One: no alcohol in their houses. Two: no girls in the upstairs bedrooms. It doesn't take long for both to be broken. And broken in style.

Starting three days and 15 hours before class starts (as a handy onscreen subtitle tells us) at the fictional Southeast Texas State college, *Everybody Wants Some!!* (named after a Van Halen song, including the double exclamation marks) follows freshman Jake (Blake Jenner) as he moves into the team houses, meets his teammates and attempts to settle into college life. And the best way to do this? Before he can even unpack, three of the returning players take him and another freshman out drinking. It's time for some good ol' male bonding.

His introduction to his team and housemates serves as ours and it's handled expertly — no-one fades into the ensemble. Finn (Glen Powell) is a charismatic ladies' man, Willoughby (Wyatt Russell) is a laidback stoner, Brumley (Tanner Kalina) is an enthusiastic but slightly dim freshman. We'll leave it at three, but could easily continue.

After this first drinking session, not much changes — the group go out to the local disco, host a raucous house party, then spend the next day hanging around until it's time to go out again. As with its (spiritual) predecessor, intricate plotting isn't high on Linklater's agenda. Instead the film focuses on the characters and camaraderie within the group as everyone jostles for position. Although that hierarchy is ever-changing, as Finn points out to Jake after he's been the victim of one particular prank: "We all take turns being chumps around here. You accept your chumpification, you wear it well and you pass it on."

Where this deviates from the *Dazed And Confused* formula is with the gender make-up of the group Linklater chooses to focus on: 12 characters, all guys. The women in the film are peripheral — potential conquests who either respond to the group's advances, or put them solidly in their place. It's not that they're portrayed poorly, just that it's not their story. The one we do spend extended time with is Beverly (Zoey Deutch), Jake's love interest, but only when the two of them are together.

To criticise this purely based on its male-to-female ratio would be akin to complaining *Sex And The City* spent too much time with the women and not enough episodes trying to see everything from Aidan's perspective, but it does affect the tone — you're effectively hanging out with 12 college-aged guys for two hours. On the surface, this could sound like a turn-off, but amid all the testosterone-fuelled bluster and (often misplaced) bravado are sweetly funny moments where the film finds its heart. And by the time the first class of the year starts and the credits roll, you'll wish your time with them hadn't been so fleeting. **JONATHAN PILE**

VERDICT A perfectly pitched blast of nostalgia, which will transport you to that time in life when the future stretched before you and anything seemed possible.



Green Room

★★★★

OUT **MAY 13** / CERT. **18** / **95 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Jeremy Saulnier
CAST Anton Yelchin, Imogen Poots, Patrick Stewart

PLOT Backwoods Oregon. Punk band The Ain't Rights have to fight for their lives when a group of neo-Nazi thugs lay siege to the bar they're playing in.

WRITER-DIRECTOR Jeremy Saulnier is among the most inventive, versatile filmmakers working in low-budget, indie genre movies. Following break-out black comedy *Murder Party* and revenge noir *Blue Ruin*, he's expertly turned to siege mechanics with this powerful suspense picture.

An opening sequence deftly establishes our heroes, The Ain't Rights, as defiant followers of the punk flame while explaining the Blues Brothers-like misunderstandings that get them booked to play a far-right club. Opening their set with a cover of the Dead Kennedys' *Nazi Punks Fuck Off* might seem suicidal, but their nerve creepily wins over a few of the audience, including the spaced-out screwdriver-murderer who fronts the house band.

Post-gig, after stumbling over a corpse, The Ain't Rights hole up in the green room with the dead girl's friend Amber (Imogen Poots, with a neo-Nazi haircut) and bouncer Big Justin (Eric Edelstein) who they take hostage. Put-upon manager Gabe (Saulnier's recurring star Macon Blair) calls in his boss, Darcy (Patrick Stewart, relishing a chance to be evil for once), to negotiate or murder away the problem.

Like many great siege movies, this alternates edgy conversations with bursts of action as both sides work out plans to break in or get away, and then have to think fast when things go south. There are shock-gore moments aplenty, and the order in which characters are culled isn't entirely guessable.

There are also hidden depths to the line-up of musos and skinhead thugs, with the presence of softie indie-drama types Anton Yelchin (as the world's worst inspirational speaker) and Alia Shawkat (as a motormouth cleverclogs guitarist with a secret fondness for Simon & Garfunkel) hinting their characters might not be the hardnut outcasts they claim — which later adds to the suspense as they reveal unexpected capabilities.



Top: Punk's not dead, it just needs to have a lie down. **Above:** Little did he know that a bottle of piss was heading his way.

It's no more an in-depth look at the American neo-Nazi scene than *Assault On Precinct 13* was a sociological study of LA gangs (though it has some unsettling specifics — "Red laces only," Darcy insists when calling in his troops), but with it so effectively meshing spiky suspense and action with blackly comic touches, who really needs it to be? **KIM NEWMAN**

VERDICT A riotous, rough-hewn and rousing punk reinvention of '70s-style grindhouse exploitation-with-a-brain cinema.


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Departure

★★★★

OUT **MAY 20** / CERT. **TBC** / **TBC MINS.**
DIRECTOR Andrew Steggall
CAST Juliet Stevenson, Alex Lawther, Phénix Brossard

→ Hormones are raging in the South of France as British teenager Elliot (Lawther) develops a crush on a boy from the village, Clément (Brossard). Meanwhile, Elliot's mother (Stevenson) packs up the holiday home, quietly crumbling after a break-up, and begins to take an interest in Clément herself — much to her son's horror. It's a beautifully shot, quietly involving character study in which Lawther really shines. Stevenson is terrific but her character is limited: the film has a far greater understanding of the emotional turmoil of its excitable young hero, who's eager to jump out of the closet into the arms of a local bit of rough. **ALS**



Florence Foster Jenkins

★★★

OUT **MAY 6** / CERT. **PG** / **110 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Stephen Frears
CAST Meryl Streep, Hugh Grant, Rebecca Ferguson

→ Meryl Streep is hilarious as the singing socialite in Stephen Frears' cosy comedy-drama. Believing herself to be a decent opera singer, Florence takes lessons and hires a pianist (a brilliant Simon Helberg) — but no-one can dare tell her she's terrible, least of all her husband St. Clair (Hugh Grant). It's a funny, fizzy period lark with stunning city settings and a top-notch cast: Streep and Grant make a believably odd couple, while Rebecca Ferguson dazzles as St. Clair's conflicted girlfriend. As a film, *Florence Foster Jenkins* doesn't take many risks, but it certainly entertains. **ALS**



Knight Of Cups

★★

OUT **MAY 6** / CERT. **15** / **118 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Terrence Malick
CAST Christian Bale, Wes Bentley, Cate Blanchett, Natalie Portman, Brian Dennehy

PLOT Haunted by his brother's death and lacking direction, LA comedy writer Rick (Bale) finds solace in a series of empty flings. Meanwhile, his family's clashes pile on further strain.

NIGHT OF CUPS opens with a proverb about a prince who travels to a far-off land in search of a pearl, only to be drugged then wake up with his memory erased. A more perfect analogy for *Knight Of Cups* you couldn't wish for. Terrence Malick's Hollywood tale is a frustratingly fleeting experience, a sleepwalk through Tinseltown that beguiles you with its visual artistry but leaves only the faintest of impressions when the curtain falls.

Broken into chapters named after Tarot cards, it charts Christian Bale's comedy writer, Rick, as he endures a personal crisis. The High Priestess sees him with lap dancers in Vegas, while The Hanged Man is, we're led to assume, a reference to his brother's suicide — a tragedy that is tearing at the fabric of his family. His other brother (Wes Bentley) is an angry, occasionally glimpsed presence; his father (Brian Dennehy) lurks guiltily on the outskirts. Rick seems only half-engaged in it all, his grief manifesting in a lethargic glaze and lots of wistful looks into the distance.

As with *To The Wonder*, Malick maps the protagonist's slowly shifting circumstances in fragmentary scenes, with disconnected cut-aways flipping from the minutiae of his life to staggering Californian vistas. There's a small earthquake; Rick does some brotherly bonding in a warehouse; he turns up at a bash thrown by Antonio Banderas' Hollywood big shot. The visuals dazzle, but the overall effect is of a jigsaw with half its pieces missing.

Bale, usually such a forceful presence, struggles to bring extra depth to a heavily improvised role. Rick is not a barrel of chuckles. He roams LA's backlots and fleshpots with the look of a man awaiting a date with the proctologist. It's a futile pursuit of happiness that takes him to Las Vegas and offers a tantalising glimpse of what Malick's *Swingers* might have looked like.

The expectation of Texan outsider Malick, a filmmaker with a keen interest in the spiritual, is he'd be less concerned with this *Entourage*-lite world of pole-dancing clubs, glossy parties and beachfront pads. Yet, as a look at Hollywood excess, it's all strangely unquestioning. As though Helmut Newton snuck into the edit room just to add more nudey bits. **PHIL DE SEMLYEN**

VERDICT For a director who's tackled big themes so often, Malick finds little worthy of his gifts in the field of male solipsism.

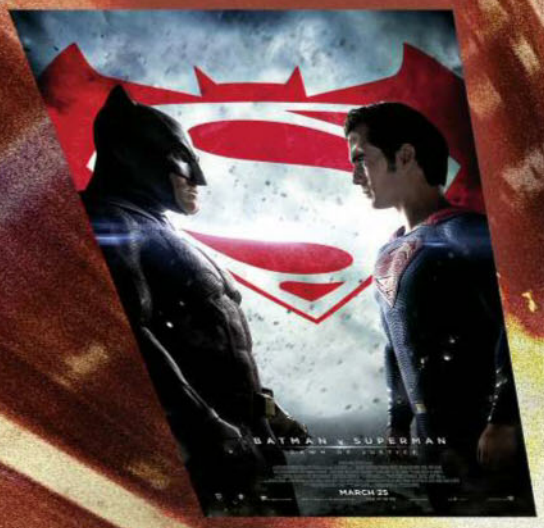
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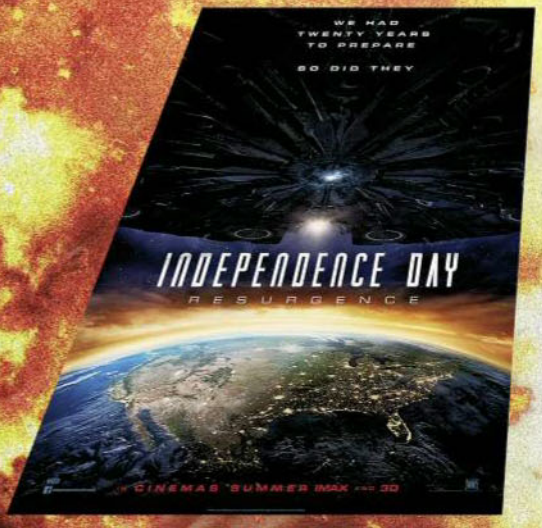
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Love & Friendship

★★★★★

OUT **MAY 27** / CERT. **U** / **93 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Whit Stillman
CAST Kate Beckinsale, Chloë Sevigny

→ With this adaptation of Jane Austen's novella *Lady Susan*, writer-director Whit Stillman (*The Last Days Of Disco*) has crafted an intricate plot peppered with laugh-out-loud cynical throwaways, as Lady Susan Vernon (Kate Beckinsale) plots to marry her ill-favoured daughter to wealthy idiot Sir James Martin (Tom Bennett). High society comedy-romance is only bearable if real viciousness is stirred into the mix of posh accents, lovely costumes and Great British character acting and, after a long sojourn in leather vampire catsuits, Beckinsale acts up an awards-worthy storm as the amusingly horrid anti-heroine. The funniest, most deliciously venomous Jane Austen movie ever made, and conclusive proof that a) Beckinsale has been seriously undervalued by the movies, and b) Stillman is a major, distinctive talent. **KN**



A Hologram For The King

★★★

OUT **MAY 20** / CERT. **12A** / **98 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Tom Tykwer
CAST Tom Hanks, Alexander Black, Sarita Choudhury, Sidse Babett Knudsen

→ Salesman Alan Clay (Tom Hanks) is in a rut — divorced, with a failing career and unable to pay for his daughter's college tuition. He also has an egg-sized lump growing on his back. He does, however, find a chance for redemption when his bosses send him to Saudi Arabia to sell a holographic conferencing system to the king. They didn't choose him, but he once met the king's nephew so he has an in, however shaky. There he balances cock-ups (missing meetings by oversleeping, trying to cut off his lump) with taking back control of his life, thanks to newly forged friendships with his doctor (Sarita Choudhury) and driver (Alexander Black). It's amiable and entertaining, but plays like a relocated *Lost In Translation*. And comes off second best. **JP**

DID YOU KNOW?
Tom Hanks is Abraham Lincoln's third cousin, four generations removed.





Suburra

★★★★

OUT **MAY 13** / CERT. **18** / **130 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Stefano Sollima
CAST Pierfrancesco Favino, Claudio Amendola, Elio Germano

→ The city of *La Dolce Vita* provides an edgier backdrop in Stefano Sollima's often chilling follow-up to the terrific *Gomorrah*. Taking its name from Ancient Rome's criminal underground, it charts the corruption endemic in the Eternal City in a flurry of explosive set-pieces and oppressive rain. At its centre is the mysterious samurai (Claudio Amendola), a gangster so powerful he doesn't even bother with bodyguards. Politicians, fixers, cardinals: a whole echelon of society is in his pocket as he plans a deal to transform the city's seafront into Las Vegas, until an accidental death sees it all violently unravel. With his shimmering nightscapes and M83's synth-laden score, Sollima marries up atmospherics and plot to create a Mafia thriller of which even Scorsese would be proud. **PDS**



Our Kind Of Traitor

★★★

OUT **MAY 13** / CERT. **15** / **108 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Susanna White
CAST Ewan McGregor, Naomie Harris, Stellan Skarsgård

→ John le Carré's finely crafted espionage thrillers provide weighty material for the screen. Just recently, *The Night Manager* got BBC audiences' pulses racing under the smart guidance of Susanne Bier, and now Susanna White (*Nanny McPhee And The Big Bang*) takes on a more modern le Carré (published in 2010), although it results in something merely solid. It concerns 'normal' couple Perry and Gail (McGregor and Harris) who, while holidaying in Antigua, become embroiled with Russian Mafia money launderer Dima (Skarsgård), who's desperately seeking sanctuary in the UK. They make a change from le Carré's usual weary spy-professionals, but Perry and Gail fail to fully engage or convince us. Instead, it is Dima who commands the attention. Part threat, part victim, he makes enjoyable what would otherwise be a sadly bland film. **DJ**

DID YOU KNOW?
Paul Bettany and Jennifer Connelly named their first son Stellan after Stellan Skarsgård



The Huntsman: Winter's War

★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **12A** / **117 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Cedric Nicolas-Troyan
CAST Chris Hemsworth, Jessica Chastain, Emily Blunt, Charlize Theron, Nick Frost, Rob Brydon, Sheridan Smith, Alexandra Roach

PLOT Seven years after Snow White defeated evil Queen Ravenna (Theron), Eric the Huntsman (Hemsworth) tries to keep the Magic Mirror away from Ravenna's sister, Ice Queen Freya (Blunt).



ALTHOUGH SOLD heavily in trailers as a prequel to 2012's dark fairy-tale remix *Snow White & The Huntsman*, the bulk of this follow-up actually takes place after that film's events. It's a small detail, but an important one, in the sense that it speaks to a wider confusion that turns *Winter's War* from a fitfully enjoyable hunk of fantasy nostalgia into a perplexing tangle of different timelines and retconned plot threads.

The core tale starts simply enough. Gravelly narration shows us nascent wicked stepmother Ravenna (Charlize Theron, gamely selling the overwrought cackling) during her pre-Snow White days and briskly sets up the tragic death that turns her kindly sister Freya (Emily Blunt) into the fearsomely powerful Elsa-alike Ice Queen. Newly fitted with a hardened heart, kick-ass frozen palace and Karl Lagerfeld hair, Freya sets about turning orphans from the villages she topples into an army of adorable killers who will grow to be her Huntsmen (never mind that half of them are women).

Two of these deadly warriors are Eric and Sara (Chris Hemsworth and Jessica Chastain, armed with ill-advised Celtic accents), who, in defiance of their queen's wishes, fall in love and plot an escape that ends in disaster. Seven years later, with Snow White indisposed (original star Kristen Stewart has been dealt a poisoned apple and doesn't even appear in flashback), Eric is enlisted to find the Magic Mirror before it falls into Freya's frigid clutches.

Thus begins (eventually) the strongest portion of the film, as Eric and a band of misfits — including Rob Brydon, Nick Frost, Sheridan Smith and Alexandra Roach stealing scenes as a quartet of boisterously offensive dwarves — chase the requisite mystical MacGuffin through a visually striking fantasyscape. Hemsworth, despite the anaesthetised Braveheart voice, does a decent impression of a man enjoying himself and French director Cedric Nicolas-Troyan (promoted from his visual effects role on the first film) brings an exhilarating intensity to a battle with a horde of goblins.

> Had she not seen that the theme was *yellow*, not blue!

But in the end, it's hard to see the wood for the enchanted trees. Allegiances switch back and forth, obvious twists come lolloping over the horizon and it all starts to resemble stray fantasy elements — from *The Lord Of The Rings*, *Frozen*, *Willow* — cynically thrown into a whirring blender with the lid off. "This is the worst plan ever," says Eric, not long before a set-up for another sequel lands with all the subtlety of a swinging axe. Hard to argue with that. **JIMI FAMUREWA**

VERDICT Visual inventiveness and spectacular casting can't quite salvage a muddled fantasy epic that, if it were a magic mirror, would be held together with gaffer tape.

ALSO OUT

The Seventh Fire

★★★

OUT **MAY 13** / CERT. **15** / **75 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Jack Pettibone Riccobono
CAST Rob Brown, Kevin Fineday, Kristine Warren, Persephone Brown

→ A poetic, harrowing but jumbled drama focusing on two Ojibwe braves to expose the poverty, chauvinism and violence of a ghettoised society whose values have been debased by drugs and booze. A sad indictment of America's dereliction of duty towards its indigenous peoples. **DP**

Evolution

★★★★

OUT **MAY 6** / CERT. **TBC** / **TBC**
DIRECTOR Lucile Hadzihalilovic
CAST Max Brebant, Roxane Duran, Julie-Marie Parmentier, Nathalie Legosles

→ A ten year-old boy discovers a dark anatomical secret in this enigmatic fantasy set on an idyllic island populated exclusively by young boys and middle-aged women. Full of provocative ideas and mesmerising images, it's impeccably photographed — a disconcerting treat. **PP**

The Daughter

★★

OUT **MAY 20** / CERT. **15** / **95 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Simon Stone
CAST Geoffrey Rush, Ewen Leslie, Paul Schneider, Miranda Otto

→ It has a fine cast, but they struggle with a verbose script in this melodramatic updating of Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* to a recessional Australian lumber town overrun by secrets and gauche symbolism. The visuals are grittily intimate, but this is essentially upmarket soap. **DP**



Cabin Fever

★★

OUT **MAY 13** / CERT. **TBC** / **99 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Travis Z
CAST Gage Golightly, Matthew Daddario, Samuel Davis

PLOT Five friends celebrating graduation rent a cabin in the woods, only to find themselves falling victim to a flesh-eating virus — and, later, some redneck types who don't take kindly to their germs.

HORROR FANS CAN be a baffling bunch sometimes, often screaming bloody murder when a genre classic gets remade, forgetting that some of their favourite modern horror films (*The Thing*, *The Fly*, *The Ring*) are remakes. In the case of the outcry over the *Cabin Fever* update, however, it's unclear whether the principal objection is that Eli Roth's 2002 film was an untouchable classic, or that 14 years simply isn't a sufficient gap to warrant a redo. Unless it's a foreign-language film, in which case it's okay.

In Hollywood terms, the *Cabin Fever* remake actually makes sense, given that a) the teenagers it's aimed at were toddlers when the original came out, and b) it failed to launch a successful franchise, despite spawning two sequels (the second of which was better than the first, all but disowned by its director Ti West). Yet there's an obvious flaw: in most cases — the recent *Martyrs* remake comes to mind — one would trot out the old, "Skip the crappy remake, and check out the original." But, let's be honest, the original *Cabin Fever*'s acclaim had more to do with the moribund state of American horror at the time of its release than its inherent brilliance. It's good, goopy fun, but it's no *Evil Dead*, much as Roth tried to channel the spirit of Sam Raimi's seminal indie horror.

Directed by Travis Z (for Zariwny) from a script that's nearly a scene-by-scene (and sometimes word-for-word) copy of the original, the shiny new 2016 version has some unimaginatively updated characters (if one can call such one-dimensional talking props "characters") and demonstrably nastier effects, the latter to curiously reductive effect. Absent is Roth's tongue-in-cheek (or tongue-through-cheek) sensibility, the most memorable set pieces— the leg-shaving scene, and the, ahem, 'sliding into third base' shenanigans — coming off as merely gross, rather than gross-out fun.

As *Cabin Fever* drags humourlessly toward its franchise-bait ending, the growing sense of dread it fosters has less to do with the intended horror of watching your BFFs become infected by a deadly virus, than the creeping suspicion that nobody's heart is really in it. **DAVID HUGHES**

VERDICT A duff remake of a beloved horror film is nothing new, but Travis Z's do-over of Eli Roth's 2002 gorefest is surely one of the laziest. Despite being made from virtually the same script, something essential has been lost in translation: Roth's gonzo spirit.

> Had they learnt nothing from *Sightseers*?



Robinson Crusoe

★★

OUT **MAY 6** / CERT. **PG** / **90 MINS.**
DIRECTORS Vincent Kesteloot, Ben Stassen
CAST Yuri Lowenthal, David Howard

→ Finally: the classic castaway story of Robinson Crusoe told from the POV of the parrot. Talking animals do not, as we recall, feature heavily in Defoe's 1719 novel, but they are the main focus of this highly disposable child-distraction device, which sees the bearded hero playing second fiddle to wildlife. A pack of vaguely villainous cats offer the only conflict to a plot which is more slight slapstick than survivalist story. Perhaps we've been spoilt by Disney and Pixar's for-all-ages sophistication, but such condescending cartoon capers and hammy English accents belong on Saturday-morning TV. **JNU**



Bobby

★★★

OUT **MAY 27** / CERT. **PG** / **95 MINS.**
DIRECTOR Ron Scalpello
CAST Harry Redknapp, Tina Moore, Geoff Hurst, George Cohen

→ Fifty years on from the 1966 World Cup, this emotionally charged documentary retells the life of England's victorious captain, Bobby Moore. It excels during the clips of the football and in wringing the requisite sadness from his final days, but there's too little analysis. Instead, it's content to be a procession of positivity about the man and fails to investigate the bigger questions it inadvertently poses. Such as why did the football establishment, including both West Ham and the FA, turn its back on him after he retired, leaving him to scratch a living in radio punditry? There's a deeper story to be uncovered, but *Bobby* doesn't do it. **JP**



The Jungle Book

★★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. **PG** / **106 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Jon Favreau
CAST (VOICES) Scarlett Johansson, Idris Elba, Bill Murray, Ben Kingsley; Neel Sethi

PLOT Raised by a pack of wolves, man-cub Mowgli (Sethi) is forced to return to "the man village" when bloodthirsty tiger Shere Khan (Elba) gets his scent in his nostrils. But getting there won't be straightforward.

YOU CAN'T ACCUSE Disney of timidity when it comes to mining its back catalogue of animated classics for live-action lolly. There's an option that avoids provoking the wrath of traditionalists, and that's having another crack at the clunkers — gussying up a *Black Cauldron* or an *Oliver & Company*. Instead, it's plumped for the classics, turning *Sleeping Beauty* into *Maleficent* and *Cinderella* into, well, *Cinderella*. And now, armed with those simple bare necessities of life — millions of dollars, and all the CGI that buys — Jon Favreau has tackled the beloved 1967 version of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

The result is one of the most visually sumptuous blockbusters this side of *Avatar*. From the off, we are plunged into extraordinarily immersive surroundings — lush green forests, stark deserts, waters so enticing you might want to bring a swimsuit.

A photo-realistic world demands a photo-realistic populace, and here Favreau doesn't disappoint, filling his jungle with wolves, tigers and bears (oh my) that look like they've stumbled into the film from a *National Geographic* documentary. Until they open their mouths and talk, of course, a phenomenon which takes a fair bit of getting used to.

The CG cast will undoubtedly be the focal point — it's hard to take your eyes off them, frankly — which might be a blessing in disguise, for the sole human performance, by newcomer Neel Sethi as Mowgli, is somewhat hit-and-miss. Green-screen has defeated actors with far more experience, so it perhaps should be no surprise that Sethi struggles. He neatly captures Mowgli's sense of spirit and adventure, but all too often appears stiff and laboured in his interactions with the CG menagerie.

The Revenant.
Salad Days.

The original movie was a playful affair, all uptempo tunes and jolly bonhomie. Even the vultures sounded like The Beatles. But without recourse to the cartoonish, this version feels much darker and more adult. The threat of death, of tearing teeth and claws, is never far away, whether it's in the guise of Idris Elba's slinking Shere Khan, Scarlett Johansson's seductive snake Kaa, or Christopher Walken's King Louie, who here is more Mafia Don than interfering ape. His growled version of *I Wanna Be Like You* is, frankly, terrifying.

It's only about halfway through with the entrance of Baloo, played by Bill Murray as a shambling stoner, that the laughs start to really flow. Favreau's movie is more straight adventure than musical, but when Murray starts letting rip with a familiar tune, the film finally swings. **CHRIS HEWITT**

VERDICT Wonderful to look at, this is a more complex affair than its animated, and more entertaining, forebear. Still, it's Disney's best live-action adaptation yet.



Sing Street

★★★★

OUT **MAY 20** / CERT. **12A** / **106 MINS.**

DIRECTOR John Carney
CAST Ferdia Walsh-Peelo, Lucy Boynton, Jack Reynor

PLOT When his family falls on hard times, Conor (Walsh-Peelo) is moved from his fee-paying school to the local comp. In a bid to make friends, work out who he is and impress a girl, he starts a band.

THERE'S AN expression used by *Sing Street*'s dorky hero to describe the music of The Cure: "happy sad". Something that makes you feel a little dolorous, but in quite a bouncy way. The same description could be used for the films of John Carney. This is his third sort-of-musical in a row, after *Once* and *Begin Again*, and it's another full-hearted celebration of laying yourself out for love, even if you get a bit trampled on in the process. This time it concerns those most romantically dramatic of creatures: teenagers.

In 1980s Dublin, the economic downturn means 14 year-old Conor (Ferdia Walsh-Peelo, a splendid find) is taken out of his posh school and sent to the local comprehensive, a nest of furious priests and bullies thrilled to tear at fresh meat. Partly for escape, mostly to impress an older girl (Lucy Boynton), Conor forms a band. Like any teenager, these kids use pop music to understand their feelings, but Conor and his friends distil the likes of Duran Duran and The Jam into their own compositions, mentored by Conor's older brother (Jack Reynor). It's as much a story of brotherly affection as romantic love, and equally moving on both counts. Of the youthful cast, Reynor is the only recognisable face, but Carney pulls strong performances from all the fresh-faced unknowns, who have to carry an equal load of drama and comedy.

The mix of music and kitchen sink drama, plus Irishness, might make *The Commitments* the obvious comparator, but think more in the vein of *Son Of Rambow*, with music instead of movies. It shares the same interest in children making their own worlds in order to escape the one they can't change. Carney enjoys the opportunity to show greater exuberance than his previous films allowed, getting cheerfully carried away with fantasy sequences and homemade music videos for genuinely catchy songs. They're pastiches, but the New Romantic strut of *Riddle Of The Model* and the Hall & Oates-meets-the *DuckTales* theme tune bounce of *Drive It Like You Stole It* will have you humming for weeks. Awkward as they are, the film lets the kids be the heroes they believe they can be.

Duran Duran and Spandau had cause for concern.

Carney keeps a bass note of melancholy running throughout, with Conor's family all in various states of resignation to ordinariness, and the Dublin surroundings as cracked and faded as last night's make-up, but it's the hope and warmth that ring out. **OLLY RICHARDS**

VERDICT Just as with *Once* and *Begin Again*, *Sing Street* will make you laugh and cry, and leave you mentally replaying its songs long after the credits roll.



SEE *GREEN ROOM* FIRST AND FOR FREE

Indie horror *Green Room* is a "riotous, rough-hewn and rousing punk reinvention of '70s-style grindhouse exploitation-with-a-brain cinema". And they aren't just anyone's words. They're ours, and we gave it four stars (see p.44).

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Scarlet Witch and Loki on vocals. Captain America and Tony Stark on guitar.

I Saw The Light

★★★

OUT **MAY 6** / CERT. **15** / **124 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Marc Abraham
CAST Tom Hiddleston, Elizabeth Olsen, Cherry Jones, Bradley Whitford

PLOT A biopic tracing the rise of country legend Hank Williams (Hiddleston) until his tragic death in 1953, at the age of 29.

ONE OF THE GREAT country singers, Hank Williams was an enthusiastic womaniser and, thanks to a back problem, also an alcoholic and painkiller addict whose all-too-short life was filled with bust-ups and scrapes and colourful encounters. On stage, he was renowned for the trademark yodel that propelled songs like *Lovesick Blues* with a jaunty, irresistible energy.

Precious little of that energy is evident, sadly, in Marc Abraham's overly austere and pedestrian biopic. Although beautifully shot by Dante Spinotti, it's a slow trek through scenes we've seen a thousand times in a thousand biopics about a thousand tortured musical geniuses — the determined rise to fame, the gradual slump into abuse of various substances, the arguments with a wife at the end of her tether. Abraham attempts to jazz things up with a curious framing device where characters are interviewed about the impact Williams had on their lives, but it's all rather rote, with precious little insight into the corrosive nature of fame. Based on this, it's hard not to wonder why Williams' story needed to be told.

And then there's Hiddleston. On paper he doesn't seem like an obvious fit for Williams. The tall, rangy part fits, but at 35, he's already older than Williams ever got to be, and seemed too damned English to play an icon of the American South, tricksy Alabama accent and all. But from the moment we see him crooning *Cold, Cold Heart* a cappella while the camera swirls around him, Hiddleston captures the festering darkness that lurked beneath Williams' aw-shucks persona. Whether it's bursting into a manic grin as he plays with a garage door, or standing staring at an audience while booze-sweat pours down his head, he makes it easy to understand why Williams was a man who could write songs called *I'll Never Get Out Of This World Alive*.

Hiddleston is matched by a fine cast, headed up by Elizabeth Olsen as Williams' first wife, Audrey. Impressively, both do their own singing and playing. Perhaps it should be no surprise that a combination of Loki and the Scarlet Witch provides much of the movie's magic. The rest stems from Williams' back catalogue. As morose as the movie is, when Hiddleston and his band are tearing through *Honky Tonkin'* or *Hey Good Lookin'*, it suddenly becomes clear why Williams' story *is* worth telling on screen. **CHRIS HEWITT**

VERDICT Hiddleston and Olsen impress, and the music remains golden, but this is just another by-the-numbers biopic.

AT A GLANCE



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GHOSTBUSTERS
SPECIAL

After 27 years, the Ghostbusters are *finally* back... With a completely new line-up. Director Paul Feig and his cast explain why this all-new origin story is the ideal franchise resurrection

WORDS **NICK DE SEMLYEN**



The Ghostbusters are back in business. *Empire* can testify to this, since we're standing outside the supernatural exterminators' iconic Hook & Ladder 8 firehouse HQ, next to not one but two parked Ectomobiles. Walking in, we clock gleaming white surfaces, a Terror Dog head mounted on the wall like a hunting trophy, and a receptionist behind a vast desk. Although she doesn't yell, "We got one!", it's enough to make us wonder if we've accidentally stepped through a portal to the seventh dimension.

This, though, is not on a New York street but the Sony lot in Culver City, Los Angeles. There's no sign of Ray sliding down the firepole or Egon inspecting spores, moulds and fungi. Instead, we're greeted by Ivan Reitman, director of the first two *Ghostbusters* movies. "Welcome to Ghost Corps," he smiles. "Sorry about the mess. We're still moving in."

Open only since October and overseen by Reitman and Dan Aykroyd, this is mission control for all things *Ghostbusters*. When not decorating their offices — Reitman's has an unopened LEGO firehouse set on the floor; Aykroyd's has portraits of famous supernaturalists on the wall, plus a Bill Murray mug on his desk — the pair devote their time to plotting the course of the *Ghostbusters* Cinematic Universe, a slimier version of what Marvel has achieved. It's an astonishing turnaround for the duo, who since the 1989 sequel had strived to pull off another film, but until recently had all but given up the ghost.

"It was partially our fault," Reitman explains. "We made this very complicated deal when we did *Ghostbusters II* which gave each of us (*Reitman, Aykroyd, Bill Murray and Harold Ramis*) equal power. That froze everything, because any one of us could block something from happening. Finally, a few things came to a head. We couldn't get any traction

Above: Spirited away: Ghostbusters Patty Tolan (Leslie Jones), Abby Yates (Melissa McCarthy) and Jillian Holtzmann (Kate McKinnon) head to a ghost emergency.





Right: Director Paul Feig inspects the new Proton Packs.

from Bill in terms of doing another one, because his brain was elsewhere. And when Harold (*Ramis*) died (*in February 2014*) I was kinda depressed, and decided I wasn't going to direct the next film myself. But everybody seemed to agree it's not fair of us just to leave the thing fallow. So finally we made a deal with Sony: they were free to expand what the series could be."

Here at Ghost Corps, then, is where an array of ectoplasmic projects are in development. There's what Reitman calls the "futuristic" film, to which the Russo Brothers were briefly attached and in which, rumours have swirled, Channing Tatum and Chris Pratt will star. ("A lot of stuff leaked out of here," Reitman frowns. "It involved different teams of Ghostbusters. It's on hold; we'll see what happens with that.") There's another, yet-to-be-announced live-action film, which is "coming along really well". There's an animated feature, which Reitman will co-direct. And a TV show is in the works, which may have a more global flavour: "There's remarkable ghost lore in every tradition. It's totally different in China and Japan and Korea, and there's extraordinary opportunity in that."

But before any of that can happen, a different project has to become a sizeable hit. Rarely has there been so much pressure on one movie — or one team.

Paul Feig strides across

the cavernous building where much of *Ghostbusters* 2016 is being shot, a former Reebok warehouse not far from Boston. The director clearly has no need of a walking stick, but he's holding one anyway: a remarkable thing with a skull atop it. "It's a medical student's cane, over 100 years old," he explains. "I collect antique walking sticks — I've got about 60 of them. When we moved here my wife discovered an antique store, run by a woman whose father has an astonishing collection. We arranged a meet and it was like one of those movies where guys show up to do a gun deal in a hotel. He opened up these suitcases, and this was one he had in there."

The relentlessly well-dressed filmmaker behind *Spy*, *Bridesmaids* and *The Heat*, Feig feels like a natural choice to shoot the first new *Ghostbusters* movie in 27 years — and not just because he likes skulls. He grew up obsessed with Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd's *Saturday Night Live* skits. He loves improvisation (Murray, famously, made up most of Peter Venkman's lines on the 1984 film). He's so into hardware he once built his own robot ("It was this weird thing with a bowl for a head... I think he's out in some landfill somewhere") and is made as giddy by the Ghostbusters' tech, their ecto-insulated encapsulators and P. K. E. valances, as their jokes.

Still, he initially turned it down. "I was in Budapest making *Spy*," he recalls, "when I was contacted by Ivan, who at that point had another script." Written by Gene Stupnitsky and Lee Eisenberg, veterans of the US version of *The Office*, it involved the original Ghostbusters (minus Ramis) passing their slime-jars to a new team. "I was flattered, but I'm always so leery of reunion shows. I prefer an origin story."

Then, in July 2014, midway through his morning walk and still mulling over the possibilities, Feig was hit by an idea. "I thought, 'What if you knocked it sideways and cast it with all the funny women I love working with? That I know how to do.'" For him, the idea of replacing Murray, Aykroyd, Ramis and Ernie Hudson with four female comedians was not a cute gimmick, but an organic twist on the formula. After all, Feig has done more than anyone to put "funny women" in the spotlight, from giving his muse Melissa McCarthy her breakout opportunity in *Bridesmaids* to writing juicy roles for Kristen Wiig, Sandra Bullock, Rose Byrne and more.

He mentioned this thought to his agent, and within minutes had an

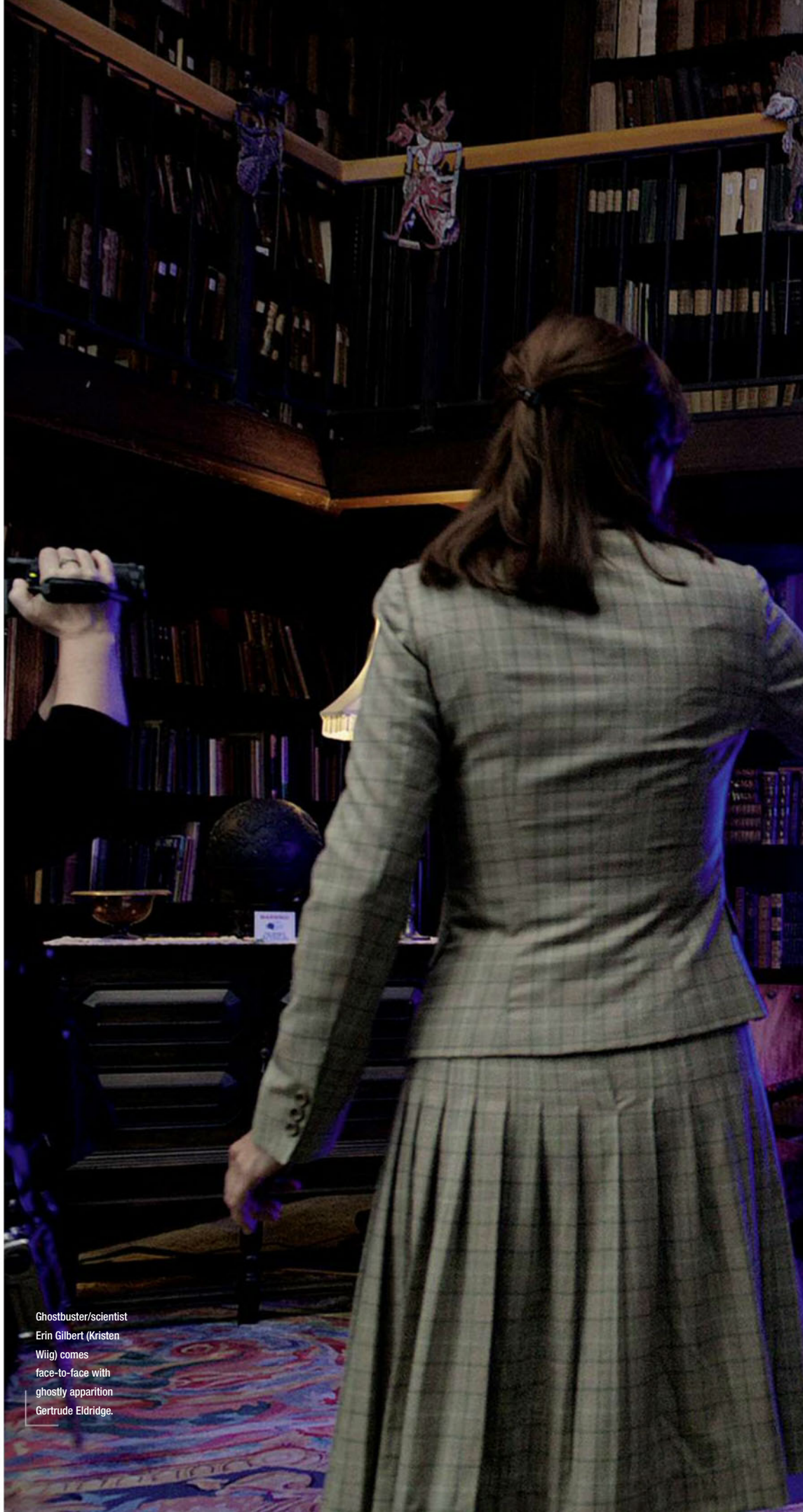
excited Amy Pascal, then the head of Sony, on the phone. Feig called his writing partner Katie Dippold and arranged to meet with her on the convention floor at Comic-Con. Next to a *Guardians Of The Galaxy* space-pod in the Marvel section, to be precise. "I have to laugh," he says, "because whatever haters we have, this was hatched right in the middle of their enclave."

Haters, it's fair to say, they do have. Since the minute it was announced, online comment sections have festered with rage about the project. Infuriated a *Ghostbusters* movie is being made without Bill Murray at its centre, and pushed to apoplexy by the fact its stars are female, enough people have derided Feig's film, sight unseen, to agitate a river of pink slime. ("In July we will see if women really can do anything as good as men. If their purpose was to make a shitty film, I guess we can already say they did it way better," reads a measured response on YouTube from 'Dr. Hatespeech'). "As soon as it was announced, someone on Twitter said he hoped I got a mild flu," remembers the director. "There was another guy who wanted Katie and me to die under a truck and taste our own blood."

Responding to those who say, "It's Venk*man*, not Venk*woman*," Pascal tells *Empire*, "I know people are talking about this being the 'girl version', but this is no more a chick flick than *Gravity*. They're scientists, they're Ghostbusters, and I just want that to be a normal thing."

Having disconnected their internet, Feig and Dippold began the script in October 2014, keeping Hallowe'en decorations up at Dippold's house throughout the writing process to enhance the mood. "We had a skeleton watching over us until Christmas," she laughs. "I'm a huge horror fan, so for me the most fun part was the scary-ghost stuff, finding insane situations into which to drop these four funny people."

Feig already had his stars in mind, all with *Saturday Night Live* experience: Wiig as everyscientist Erin Gilbert, McCarthy as her ghost-enthusiast best friend Abby Yates, Kate McKinnon as zany nuclear engineer Jillian Holtzmann, and relative newcomer (albeit, at 48, the oldest of the group) Leslie Jones as subway employee Patty Tolan. Continuing the gender-flipping, Chris Hemsworth would play dim-witted but enthusiastic secretary Kevin. The story being crafted around these heroes was a reboot, not a sequel — "I wanted to start with a clean slate... In this world,



Ghostbuster/scientist Erin Gilbert (Kristen Wiig) comes face-to-face with ghostly apparition Gertrude Eldridge.







there's not yet proof of ghosts," says Feig — with a combination of nostalgic beats (Slimer's back, as is Mr. Stay Puft, though not in the form you might expect) and fresh material.

As they typed, the co-writers felt enormous pressure on their shoulders. Then one morning a FedEx delivery arrived. "I was particularly stressed that day," Dippold recalls. "I opened up the package and inside was a copy of a book about ghosts Dan Aykroyd's dad had written. Attached was a note from Dan: 'Dear Katie, I'm here if you need any help, but most of all just enjoy yourself.' That was an important reminder: first and foremost, *Ghostbusters* is meant to be *fun*."

***Empire* soon gets to** witness the fun for ourselves. Among the sets spread across the Norwood building are an authentically grubby New York subway tunnel and an even grubbier abandoned Chinese restaurant ('Zhu's Authentic Hong Kong Food') that doubles as our heroes' HQ. But most impressive is a two-storey Art Deco lobby, which today is bathed in an eerie Slimer-green glow. This is the Mercado Hotel, in which two of the new Ghostbusters — Kristen Wiig and Melissa McCarthy — are currently on patrol, brandishing charged-up proton guns for their pursuit of an entity named "Rowan". A class-5 free-roaming vapor? An electrokinetic spectre? An octopus that can predict football results? It's anyone's guess.

Feig, who in his three-piece suit looks like he could be reprising the '84 film's snooty concierge, signals for the cameras to roll. Wiig and McCarthy say their scripted lines. Then they start to throw in their own variations. Before long, Feig and Dippold are scribbling lines on Post-It notes, which are whizzed across to the actors. The result is a lengthy succession of takes that feature, among many others, the following "alts":

"Eat my stream, a-hole!"
"Eat my proton!"
"Show yourself, you little troll..."
"Come out, Rowan. There's a toilet that needs unclogging."
"Rowan, collect your virginity from the lost and found."
"I can do this all day, Rowan. Busting makes me feel good."
"I actually feel kind of terrible. My knees are clicking, my biceps are on fire and my hands are cramping up..."

Eventually, a chandelier crashes down and the pair let loose their proton streams. It turns out there are a few perils when it comes to shooting a *Ghostbusters* action sequence. One is obvious: don't cross the streams. "Oops, I just killed you!" beams McCarthy, having accidentally sliced through Wiig's

Above left: Paul Feig directs on-set at Ghostbusters HQ.



Above: Chris Hemsworth aka dim-witted Kevin, given the once-over by Erin, Abby and Jillian for the job of secretary.

legs. Another concern: not looking like a complete berk. "I've had some trouble with my proton face," says Wiig. "I found I was making a face that was not anything I'd want to see really large on the screen, so I had to find a new one for myself. I just could not go with the original."

As for the final alt line quoted above, there's some fact mixed in with the fiction. "At one point I had to tell Paul, 'Hey, I'm a comedian. I'm not a fucking stunt person! What the fuck, yo?'" laughs Leslie Jones, who says she lost around 50lb during the shoot. "He'd always be like, 'You can do it, Jones. Come on.' We've been doing some Van Damme shit on this one."

In this *Ghostbusters* film, the slimings are more vigorous ("Water actually activates it, so if you think you have it all off and then you get wet, the slime comes back," says Wiig ruefully). There are possession scenes. There will even be a bout of hand-to-ghost-hand combat in Times Square, thanks to new tech dreamed up by Holtzmann (and approved off-screen by an MIT professor of engineering). "I mostly drew details from my own little bank vault of weirdness," says McKinnon of her bizarre-looking, fingerless gloves-wearing character, who is fast becoming an internet favourite. "In my youth, all I did was take apart electronics and pretend each circuit board was its own world."

At Feig's insistence, wherever possible the ghosts have been played by actors on set, sometimes performers on stilts. "In the original they were kinda cartoony, which I like," he says, "but I want everything in this movie to be as real as a movie based on fake stuff can be." According to the cast, it worked. "The first ghost we saw, we were all legitimately scared," says McCarthy. "With the make-up and the costumes and the light, they looked pretty darn terrifying. One ghost chased me down

BEST IN SHOW

WE PICK OUR FAVOURITE *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE* SKETCHES FOR EACH OF THE NEW GHOSTBUSTERS



Kristen Wiig: Surprise Party
Wiig's best characters are completely deranged. Here, Sue can't cope with the prospect of an impending surprise party she's helping to throw, and mentally collapses at the promise of balloons and clowns.



Melissa McCarthy: Women's Group
McCarthy's roster of *SNL* sketches is short, but she makes her characters count. Take troubled, combat trouser-wearing PJ, who derails a gentle women's group's discussion with her plans to avenge her father's bloody death.



Leslie Jones: Crazy Bitches
Jones' *SNL* persona is frequently furious. Sliding in as a "relationship expert", she explains exactly what about men makes women crazy. "Every girl grew up with some uncle staring at them at Thanksgiving, saying how much you've *grown*..."



Kate McKinnon: Cecilia Giménez
One of *SNL*'s great chameleons — her Justin Bieber is spot on — McKinnon's best moment sees her becoming a crazed version of Cecilia Giménez, the Spanish woman who became famous for 'repairing', i.e. ruining, an ancient portrait of Jesus.
OLLY RICHARDS



SLIME AND SLIME AGAIN

PREPARE TO MEET SLIMER 2.0

→ "If I saw a *Ghostbusters* reboot, there are a bunch of things I'd be really bummed about if they didn't show up," says Paul Feig. "So we've put them in, but we've given them our own spin." Hence the new Ecto-1: not the famous Miller Meteor 1959 Cadillac, but a '93 Caddy Fleetwood hearse. The proton packs are jazzed up (check out that psychokinetic energy sink!). The jumpsuits now have hot-orange piping. And most excitingly of all, cinema's greediest ghost is now even uglier.

"We have six effects houses working on the movie, and the thing all of them wanted to do was Slimer," says VFX supervisor Peter Travers. In the end the coveted job went to Sony Pictures Imageworks and MPC. "When we started research we realised that he's amorphous — even within the first movie there are multiple puppets that look radically different — which gave us free rein to make him a little grosser. We've added random bits of hair in weird places, like he's an old person. And we've added a bunch of goopy slime to him, just pouring off his arms. I mean, he *is* called Slimer."

Originally inspired by John Belushi, for the first two films the toothy, gibbering, potato-shaped blob was achieved largely with puppets. The new movie combines old technology (a fully articulated Slimer was built and operated by *Ghostbusters* veteran Rick Lazzarini) with new (CG augmentation) to create the most disgusting and deranged version yet.

"The guy is a loose cannon," says Travers. "I think that's where we've pushed the performance: he's just not mentally there, he's crazy, he's completely unpredictable. You can stuff five emotions into a two-second shot."







a subway tunnel; only afterwards did I realise it was a guy called Dave who I've known for 15 years."

Another way Feig has shaken up the formula: for the first time, the primary villain of a *Ghostbusters* film is a human. Yes, that "Rowan" the team are hunting in the Mercado turns out to be a regular bloke, albeit a super-smart and better-equipped scientist (played by Neil Casey) bent on paranormal mischief. "Rowan is the ultimate loner," says the director. "A regular New Yorker whose goal is to bring some things back to this world. He wants to trap ghosts, but for a different purpose..." And that's all Feig will reveal about this still very much locked-down plot point.

Overseeing the mayhem with his walking stick and carnation, he looks the picture of unflappability. "The man's ridiculous. It's sweltering hot and I've never seen one drop of sweat," marvels Amy Pascal, who resigned from Sony amid the 2014 hacking scandal, and is here today in a producer capacity. But under the surface, Feig reveals in a quiet moment, he's paddling like a desperate duck.

"Each day I wake up thinking, 'Don't let this be the day I screw it up. Make sure you get enough stuff! Shoot it right! Get the right performances!' It's just the fear of, 'Is this the day it's not going to happen?'"

Six months later, Feig's

still got the fear. It's March 2016 and, with *Ghostbusters* well into post-production, he's at his office in Burbank, LA. Like its resident, Feigco is a mix of quirkiness and sophistication: there is an enormous print of a £20 note by artist Paul Rousso ("I change it to a $20 [bill] when I'm meeting an American," jokes Feig, an Anglophile) and a nameplate on the desk that reads "Chief Business Gentleman".

Top: Secretary Kevin proves to Erin and Patty that he's not just a pretty face — he can order in takeaway too. **Above:** Director Feig has a shot at brandishing a Proton Gun.



Above: Erin, Abby, Jillian and Patty discuss bustin' tactics.

Well into mixing the film's sound and approving its 1,600 or so visual-effects shots, the director looks relaxed enough. But he admits to still having jitters, no doubt increased by the pushback against the film, which has only intensified since marketing began. And in disturbing ways: "I had this guy send me a picture of a Nazi shooting a black woman in the head," reveals Leslie Jones. "I can't believe some of this stuff. It's just a movie. It's literally just a movie. We're not writing a true story about people killing ghosts, you know? *Minions* ain't real either!"

Feig is stoic. "As much as I've been confronted with really terrible stuff, I've had encouragement too," he insists. "It all comes from a place of passion. I'm just trying to stay vigilant and make the right decision about a million things. The minute you relax, the chances of it going in the toilet are very high."

Only time will tell now whether *Ghostbusters* will be a hit that launches a thousand spin-offs, or whether a mob of misogynists is about to have a great summer. But nobody can accuse Feig of not giving it his all. Among his achievements — redesigning the Proton Packs (they're now synchrotron, not cyclotron, as we're sure you surmised from the photos); making Boston look like New York; directing Slimer — was obtaining the blessings of the original cast and crew. Reitman and Aykroyd, obviously, with the latter even contributing some lines of technical dialogue. Harold Ramis' wife and children, says Pascal, dropped by the set on two "super-emotional" days. And Aykroyd, Bill Murray, Sigourney Weaver and Ernie Hudson all agreed to do cameos, albeit not as their original characters.

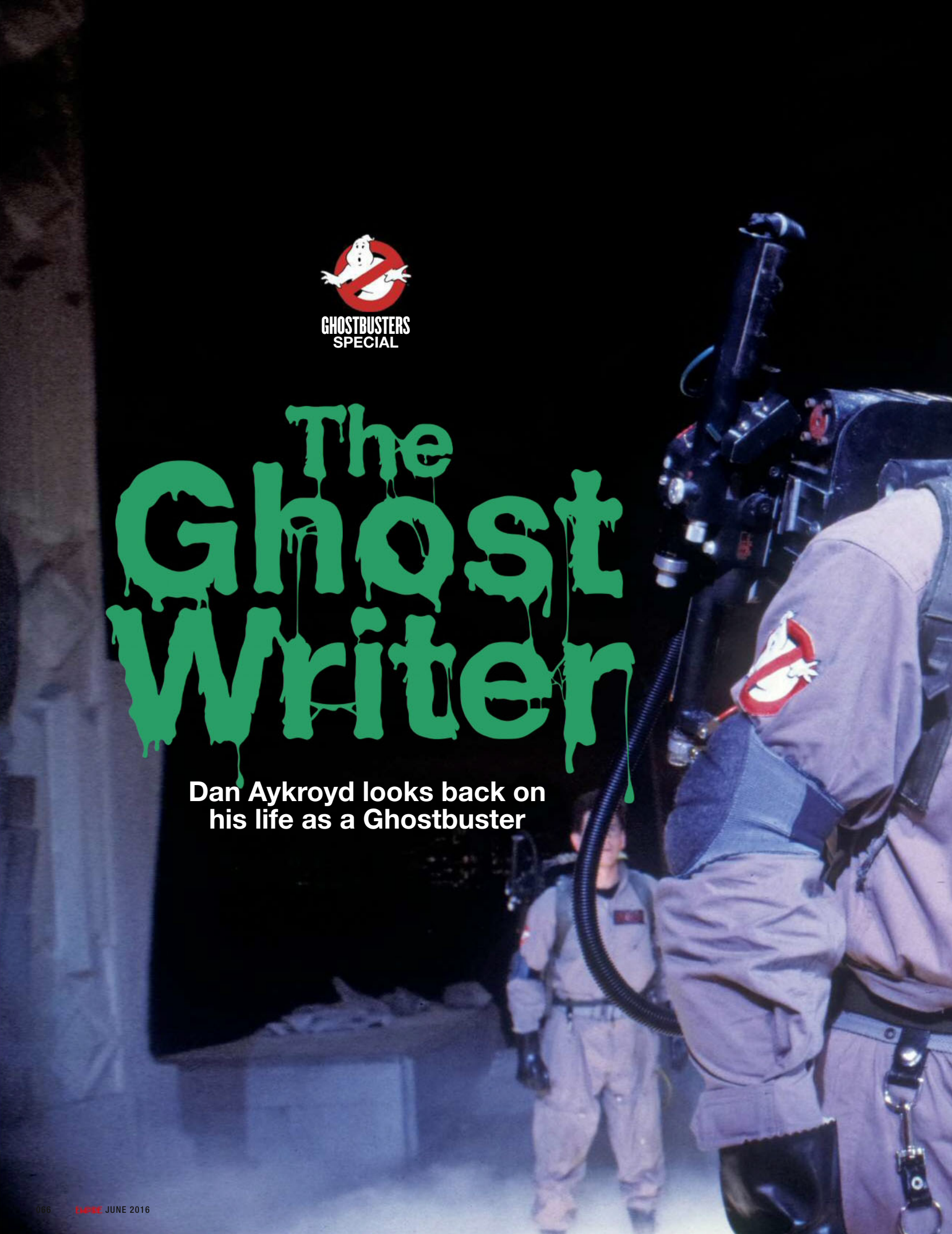
"You just try not to vomit. I mostly succeeded in that," says McKinnon of shooting scenes with her comedy heroes. "It was crazy, crazy, crazy." Even Chris Hemsworth, the mighty Thor, was thunderstruck: "I hadn't met Bill before. It was so cool to see it through his eyes and listen to him talk about how the outfits were similar or the packs were different."

It being Bill Murray, naturally, it nearly didn't happen. "My wife used to manage his brother Joel way back when," says Feig, "but we never actually crossed paths until the 40th anniversary party for *Saturday Night Live*. I mustered up the courage to go over to say hello, but when I mentioned the film he sort of said, 'Oh yeah,' and darted off. I was like, 'Oh no, I just blew my chance with Bill Murray.' We were hearing on the grapevine that he might show up, but until the day before we had no idea whether he would. He did. And it was really special." Feig may have intended this to be an origin story, but he's managed to make it a reunion show, too. A supernatural feat.

GHOSTBUSTERS
SPECIAL

The Ghost Writer

Dan Aykroyd looks back on his life as a Ghostbuster




STANTZ

Ghostbusters was something I grew up with. Besides being a dentist, my great-grandfather Sam was a spiritualist and a researcher. He would visit all the psychic acts that came to Kingston, Ontario, and decide whether something was for real or a hoax. He had a live-in medium, named Walter Ashurst, to channel spirits in the old farmhouse where I still live in Canada. One time Ashurst crawled up on the chair, hunched over, gnarled his hands and began to speak in a German accent about physics and fission and atomic energy. A little research was done afterwards, and it was discovered that Dr. Charles Steinmetz, the famous inventor, used to crawl up on his chair like that when he worked.

It became a family business. My grandfather, a Bell telephone engineer, commissioned a sketch of a high-vibrating crystal that, if you built it, was theorised to be able to cut through to the fifth, sixth and seventh dimensions, wherever these spirits roam and come from. We'd visit my grandparents' house every summer while I was growing up, and instead of old *Life* and *Look* magazines lying around, there would be *American Society For Psychical Research* journals or essays by Albert Durrant Watson or Arthur Conan Doyle. So as an eight year-old kid, I'm reading all this. The impressive thing was that all these people were serious inquirers, scientists going, "There's something here. There's a reason why you can look at 85 cards and someone's going to guess what 30 of them are."

My father, Peter, continued the tradition by writing the book *A History Of Ghosts*. And I am a firm believer, too. I've attended many séances — we had a great one the other night, with a medium who brought back names that meant something to my father, who is 94 now and with us in the house. She brought back the name of his cat, and I never even knew he had a cat! Another time, on one stormy evening, I ran out of the farmhouse because I saw three or four big, green, glowing S's, like snakes, at the top of the stairs. They were ectoplasmic tubes, maybe, marching across the stairs in the lightning. I just turned around and fled.



They weren't afraid of no ghost: Dr. Peter Venkman (Bill Murray), Dr. Raymond Stantz (Dan Aykroyd) and Dr. Egon Spengler (Harold Ramis).

One day, shortly after

I'd left *Saturday Night Live* in 1979, I was reading about quantum physics and parapsychology. I started thinking about all those old ghost comedies by the Bowery Boys, Bob Hope, Abbott and Costello. Then it occurred to me: "If you marry up these two things, what would happen?"

The first draft of *Ghostbusters* was pretty wild. I went to a quarry and got a big hunk of granite, if you know what I mean. I threw it all in there, with full knowledge that I was writing something that was not going to be made in that form, but I was able to lay in so much of what became the first and second movies. Back then, it was going to be Eddie Murphy, myself, Belushi and Murray. The tone was much darker. Slimer wasn't so cute. One of the concepts I had was for the Ghostbusters to have an inter-dimensional interceptor, so they could go back and forth between dimensions. I have that idea in a working draft, and maybe it'll get made. We'll see...

Michael Ovitz, the agent, read it in the raw granite form and said, "This is going to be amazing. Let's get Ivan." Ivan (*Reitman*) read it, brought in Harold



Ghostbusters (clockwise) Winston Zeddemore (Ernie Hudson), Spengler, Venkman and Stantz.







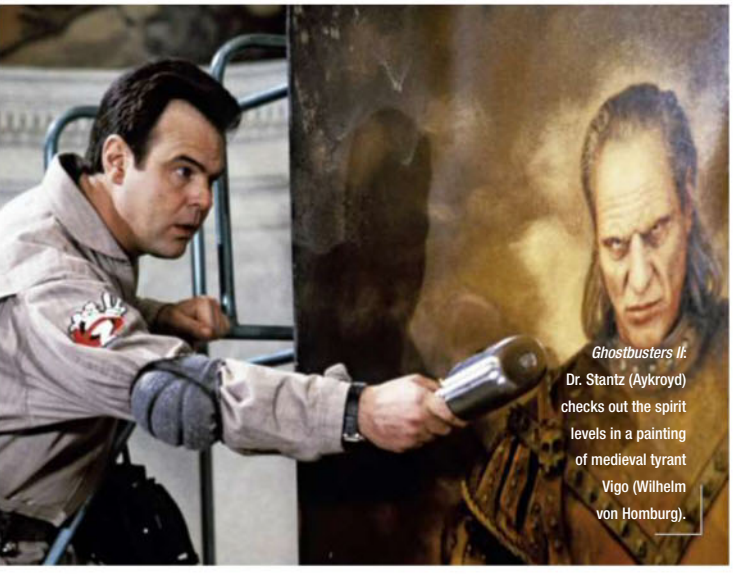
• PHOTOS: GHOSTBUSTERS: THE ULTIMATE VISUAL HISTORY BY DANIEL WALLACE/TITAN BOOKS. GHOSTBUSTERS TM AND © 2015 COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



Sigourney Weaver as Dana Barrett on set, getting roughed up by the 'hands' of demonic spirit Zuul.



Mr. Stay Puft gets ready for his close-up.



Ghostbusters II: Dr. Stantz (Aykroyd) checks out the spirit levels in a painting of medieval tyrant Vigo (Wilhelm von Homburg).

GHOSTBUSTERS SPECIAL

(*Ramis*) and within two or three weeks, the rewrite was underway.

You don't put the hunk of granite on the executive's desk. So away we went to sculpt. The three of us hammered out the script in Canada, in LA, in New York, all over. We spent two fun weeks at my place in the Vineyard. That house, which my daughters own now, is up on a hill with a beautiful, 272-degree view of the ocean. But we buried ourselves in the basement for eight hours a day, coming out blinking like moles.

We were writing the part of Venkman for Murray, but we knew the bigger challenge was getting Bill to a) read the material, and b) show up to work. On the first day we really had no idea if he was going to appear. But he did, and the shoot was pure pleasure. The biggest joy was taking over New York, just watching the people in the city react when we were driving about in the Ecto-1 and walking about with the packs, coming out of public places... I loved stealing footage — Ivan would just set up a camera and we'd walk down Fifth Avenue. There we were, the four of us, Harold, Ernie and me and Billy, going to work. It was a great time. I owned Chicago once, with *The Blues Brothers*, and on the *Ghostbusters* movies I owned New York.

I knew we were making something people would come to see, like they came to *Animal House* and *Stripes*. I knew it would open. But I didn't know it would stay at the US box-office number-one slot for 13 weeks. It was like we'd hit a gusher in the oil business. Roberto Goizueta, the brilliant Cuban entrepreneur who was CEO of Coke and took over Columbia Pictures, saw the movie and hated it. He said, "Why did we buy this?" Three weeks later, Coca-Cola stocks were rocketing on the basis of the box-office returns for Columbia. The movie just *worked*.

I know Bill's said some

negative things about the sequel, but there are some tremendous sequences. The river of slime, Vigo, the whole baby thing, the possessed Ghostbusters... I'd say it holds up to the first movie about 75 per cent. If there's a deficiency, it's the ending — it's hard to follow up Mr. Stay Puft. But I consider it a great companion to the first movie. And it was a hit.

I wrote a third one, *Hellbent*, which oddly enough in the fog of the future is under consideration again — or parts of it. The villain was based on Donald Trump. I wanted Alec Baldwin to play him, the devil in a thousand-foot black onyx tower overlooking the hell-pit mine of Central Park. There's great stuff in it, but Bill wanted to move on to other things.

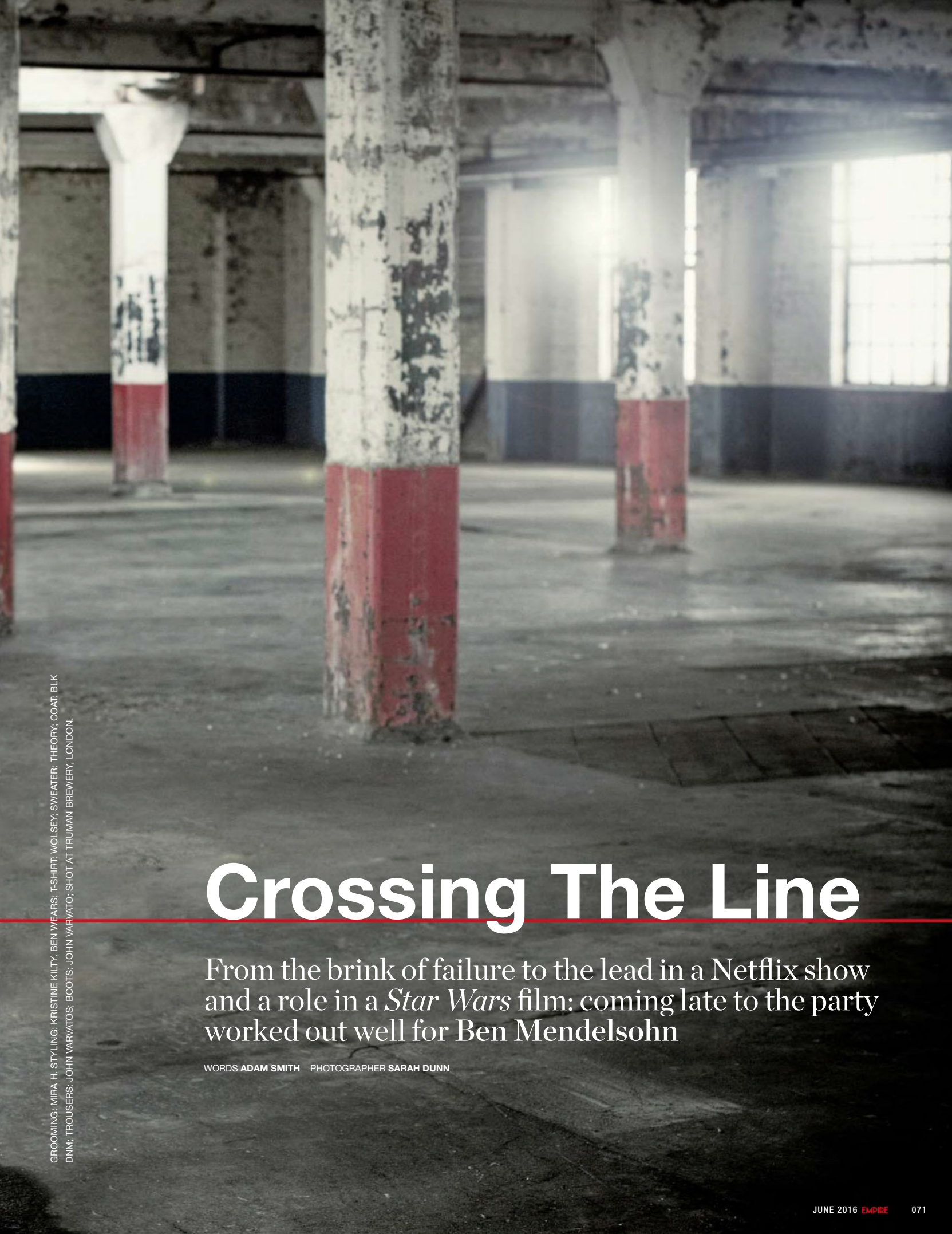
A while later, we did a few drafts based on the old Ghostbusters handing over the torch to a new group. It was fine, but the studio thought it lacked freshness. So the thing lay dormant for a while. To be honest, we were dead in the water. I had completely given up on it. And then along came Paul Feig.

I'm so happy it's worked out and that suddenly there are all kinds of new ideas for *Ghostbusters* movies bubbling up. It just took someone to reinvigorate it. And we thank Paul Feig for doing that. I'm going to work with Ivan to develop anything that comes along. I will act as a writer, a producer — that's how I'll keep my hand in. Ivan and I are in collaboration now in a new phase of our careers that frankly we did not anticipate.

Ghostbusters has never left my life. What I love is pulling up for signings at liquor stores for my Newfoundland-made, no-additive Crystal Head vodka, and seeing an Ectomobile or two. Or sometimes as many as 30 people kitted out as Ghostbusters, wearing everything from the slime pack to the dark jumpsuits — refinements you wouldn't believe. I always have them come up first, because the packs weigh about 100 lb. And many have children with them, also dressed as Ghostbusters. There are three generations of fans now. It's become a perennial, like how I loved *Abbott And Costello Meet The Invisible Man* or *Ghost Chasers*. And with DVD, digital and streaming, the legacy will be there forever.

***GHOSTBUSTERS* IS OUT ON JULY 15 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**





Crossing The Line

From the brink of failure to the lead in a Netflix show and a role in a *Star Wars* film: coming late to the party worked out well for Ben Mendelsohn

WORDS **ADAM SMITH** PHOTOGRAPHER **SARAH DUNN**

GROOMING: MIRA H. STYLING: KRISTINE KILTY. BEN WEARS: T-SHIRT: WOLSEY; SWEATER: THEORY; COAT: BLK DNM; TROUSERS: JOHN VARVATOS; BOOTS: JOHN VARVATO; SHOT AT TRUMAN BREWERY, LONDON.

ONE DAY IN 2002, EIGHT years before a little Australian crime indie called *Animal Kingdom* swerved from left-field and changed his life, Ben Mendelsohn found himself sitting alone in a make-up trailer wearing a blue pig's head. It is fair to say that, when he had accepted the Aussie Oscar for his supporting role in coming-of-age drama *The Year My Voice Broke* 15 years earlier, this was not how he'd envisaged his future in the entertainment business. But now here he was, third space-pig from the left.

"It was an episode of *Farscape*," he remembers. "So there I am, just waiting alone in a blue space-pig's mask. And this other actor came through the door of the trailer. And he had a blue pig's head on, too. And we just looked at each other in our blue fucking space-pig heads. And I remember very clearly thinking, *'Oh fuck me. It's come to this.'*"

Things are, it's fair to say, a little different now.

WHEN *EMPIRE* MEETS MENDELSOHN ON

a sunny spring morning in London's East End, he is in the rather more comfortable position of owning the lead role in a Netflix original series. After spotting him in 2012's *The Place Beyond The Pines* as wily bank robber Robin, the showrunners of *Bloodline*, Todd A. Kessler, his brother Glenn and Daniel Zelman, immediately pegged Mendelsohn for the main role of Danny Rayburn, the dark heart of their gestating drama. Robin was, like so many of Mendelsohn's other, impactful supporting turns in American movies, a role which showcased his mastery of wiry, unpredictable characters.

Bloodline is one of streaming's better-kept secrets, one that's a little lost in the noise surrounding its flashier stablemates *House Of Cards* and *Orange Is The New Black*, but which quietly, confidently pushes the boundaries of what might be possible with the new form. Set in the Florida Keys, it has Mendelsohn as black sheep Danny, a typically mercurial figure for the actor, making an uninvited return to his well-heeled family's home, bearing more baggage than a Heathrow arrivals hall and upending the apparently idyllic existence of his siblings (Kyle Chandler, Linda Cardellini and Norbert Leo Butz) and parents (Sissy Spacek and Sam Shepard).

The show's stroke of structural genius is that in the first episode's opening moments, audiences watch the siblings brutally murder Danny, the remaining drama being a gripping, horrified examination of how we get to this awful conclusion. The result is a deeply satisfying, blissfully bingeable slow-burn of a show: *Cape Fear* meets *The Magnificent Ambersons* played out in air heavy with the scents of jacaranda and crack.

"I think the guys would be very happy with those cinematic touchstones," Mendelsohn says, cigarette in one hand, an unreliable lighter in the other. "I'm very proud of it. Danny's a fucking great character." How exactly he returns for the second season is something Mendelsohn is unable to discuss, but clearly there is still a long-form story to tell. One that gives Mendelsohn, an actor more used to fleeting character roles, something deep and rich to really get his teeth into.

"The thing with the whole streaming business is that you can unfold a story in both great and beautifully small detail. It's incredibly satisfying and the first of these shows that's conceived with a story that needs to be told in this way. With great respect, because I'm a huge fan, *House Of Cards* is built on a pre-existing show. But I like to think we're the first show really purpose-built for this new form. And people that dig it, dig it like fucking crazy."





Alongside Owen Teague as Nolan, Danny's son, in Season 2 of *Bloodline*.



Mendelsohn's breakthrough role as "psychotic ring leader" Andrew 'Pope' Cody in *Animal Kingdom*.



Getting a good hose down for being violent prison inmate Neville Love in *Starred Up*.

Something else that people dig like crazy, of course, is *Star Wars*, a universe that Mendelsohn has now joined, in another role he can't discuss (though we know it's not a space-pig) for Gareth Edwards' upcoming spin-off *Rogue One*. Mendelsohn is in no doubt about what's riding on the deal, though it only really hit home when he sat down to watch *The Force Awakens* last year.

"I was utterly delighted with it," he remembers. "It exceeded my expectations profoundly. It took all the *Star Wars* things that you loved and took them deeper. Watching that movie, and knowing what I knew, it was just an incredible place to be."

MENDELSOHN IS A LITTLE RESISTANT TO

the idea that 2010's *Animal Kingdom* was the late-arriving watershed moment in his career, propelling him from a *Farscape* bit part to a *Netflix* lead. "Look, from my perspective that narrative is not the *whole* truth. I had been working on and off for a long time. But from the outside I can see it is totally reasonable to look at my career and divide it into before and after *Animal Kingdom*," he says of his breakthrough role as Pope, the psychotic ringleader of a gang of suburban thugs, which he delivered just six years ago at the relatively ripe old age of 40. "I was incredibly lucky that (*director*) David Michôd had me in mind from the beginning, and for a role that frankly I don't think many people would have thought of me for."

What Michôd had seen lurking untapped in Mendelsohn was an uncanny ability to turn scenes on a dramatic hairpin, from quietly simmering danger to balls-out terrifying in a Pesci-like nanosecond. *Animal Kingdom* was a debut that Michôd had difficulty following up (his next film, post-apocalyptic Western *The Rover*, teased out a transformative turn from Robert Pattinson but only made half as much as *Animal Kingdom* at the box office), but for the post-Pope Mendelsohn it led to a flurry of offers.

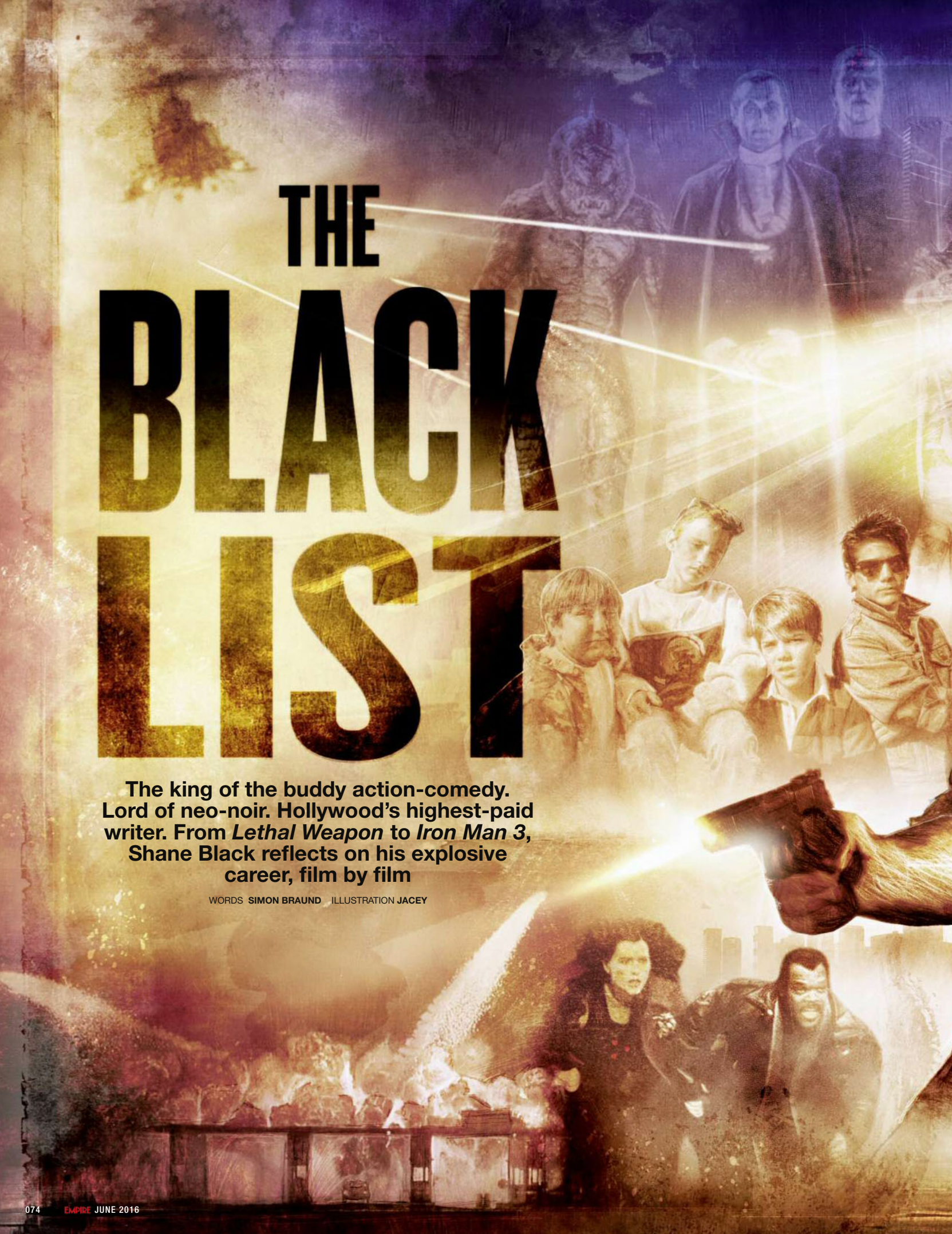
Subsequently, he effortlessly channelled both pathos and violence as a lifer with a nagging conscience alongside Jack O'Connell in prison drama *Starred Up*. Christopher Nolan mined a weaselly turn out of him as corrupt industrialist Daggett in *The Dark Knight Rises*. He was restrained and irresistibly touching in last year's splendidly downbeat gambling/buddy movie *Mississippi Grind*. And as far as Mendelsohn was concerned, it all came off just in the nick of time.

"At some point you have to go, 'Okay, so it's not happening,'" he says of those long fallow years. "Hollywood is built for people in their teens and twenties, and to a lesser degree in their thirties. When that window is closed, then you're an idiot if you don't countenance what it means. So when I got into my mid-thirties, I gave myself two years. And then I thought, 'Okay, I'll give myself two more years.' But I'm a believer in Rudyard Kipling when it comes to any kind of career in the arts — his line about treating failure and success as the two imposters that they are. It's easier to do that with success than it is with failure, though. Failure, well, you tend to have much more of an *intimate* relationship with it."

We ask what the earlier Ben Mendelsohn, sitting disconsolately in a blue porker's head, would have thought if he, *Bloodline*-like, had known how this was going to turn out?

"Put it this way, if I had known back in 1992 that I was going to be in a *Star Wars* movie, I don't think I would have worried about a whole bunch of shit that I worried about throughout my life," he says. "I think I would have fucking breathed a little easier. It's wound up better than I could have dreamed."

***BLOODLINE* SEASON 2 WILL BE AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY ON NETFLIX FROM MAY 27.**



THE BLACK LIST

The king of the buddy action-comedy. Lord of neo-noir. Hollywood's highest-paid writer. From *Lethal Weapon* to *Iron Man 3*, Shane Black reflects on his explosive career, film by film

WORDS **SIMON BRAUND** ILLUSTRATION **JACEY**



"I CALL THIS THE TORTURE PIT"



Shane Black has invited *Empire* to his LA home, an elegant townhouse in the old-money neighbourhood of Hancock Park, and led us past bookshelf after bookshelf of detective novels (from Chandler and Hammett to the lowliest pulps) to the very spot where he now works on his scripts; a fitting place, he feels, for us to discuss them. Fortunately, it doesn't look at all torturous: a pair of deep velvet couches face each other across a sturdy, wooden coffee table. But Black, the man who gave us *Lethal Weapon*, *The Last Boy Scout* and *Iron Man 3*, takes the business of screenwriting very seriously — and has done for most of his life, with incredible success.

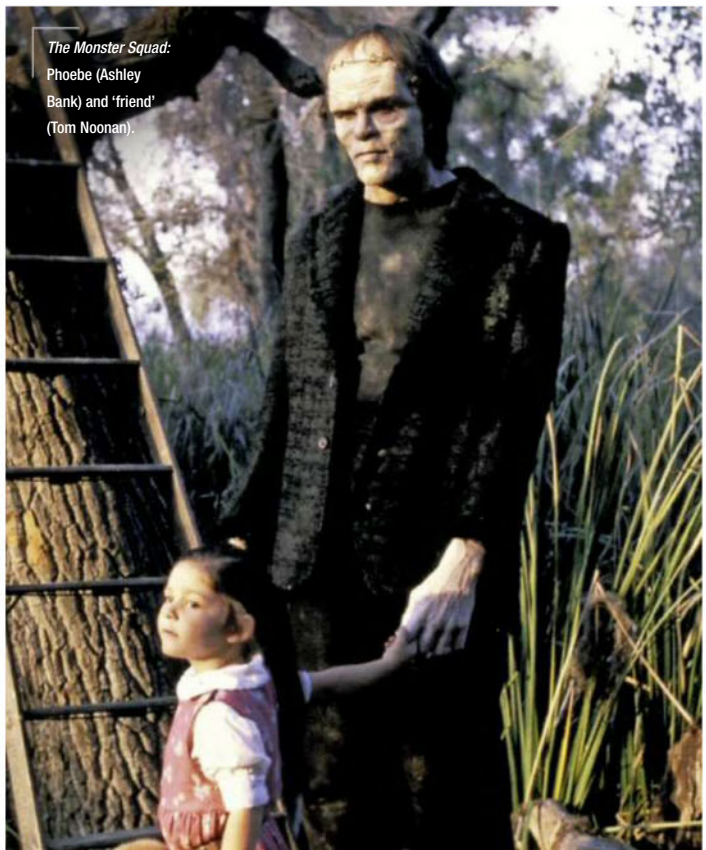
Black was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in December 1961 and as a child was not merely an avid reader but an insatiable one, often going without lunch to save money for the latest Ed McBain or Warren Murphy. He also had a passion for writing, but gave little thought to making a career of it. Then, while he was in high school, the Black family relocated to California, where he would go on to enrol at UCLA to study film and theatre. He continued to write, concentrating on screenplays. A roommate at the time, Fred Dekker, also a writer, was happy to give his friend's scripts to his agent to pass around. One of those was an offbeat buddy-cop movie called *Lethal Weapon*. It caught the eye of *48 Hrs.* producer Joel Silver — who pops up like a bearded fairy godmother throughout Black's career — and in early 1985, Silver persuaded Warner Bros. to buy it for $250,000. Black was 23 at the time.

LETHAL WEAPON (1987)

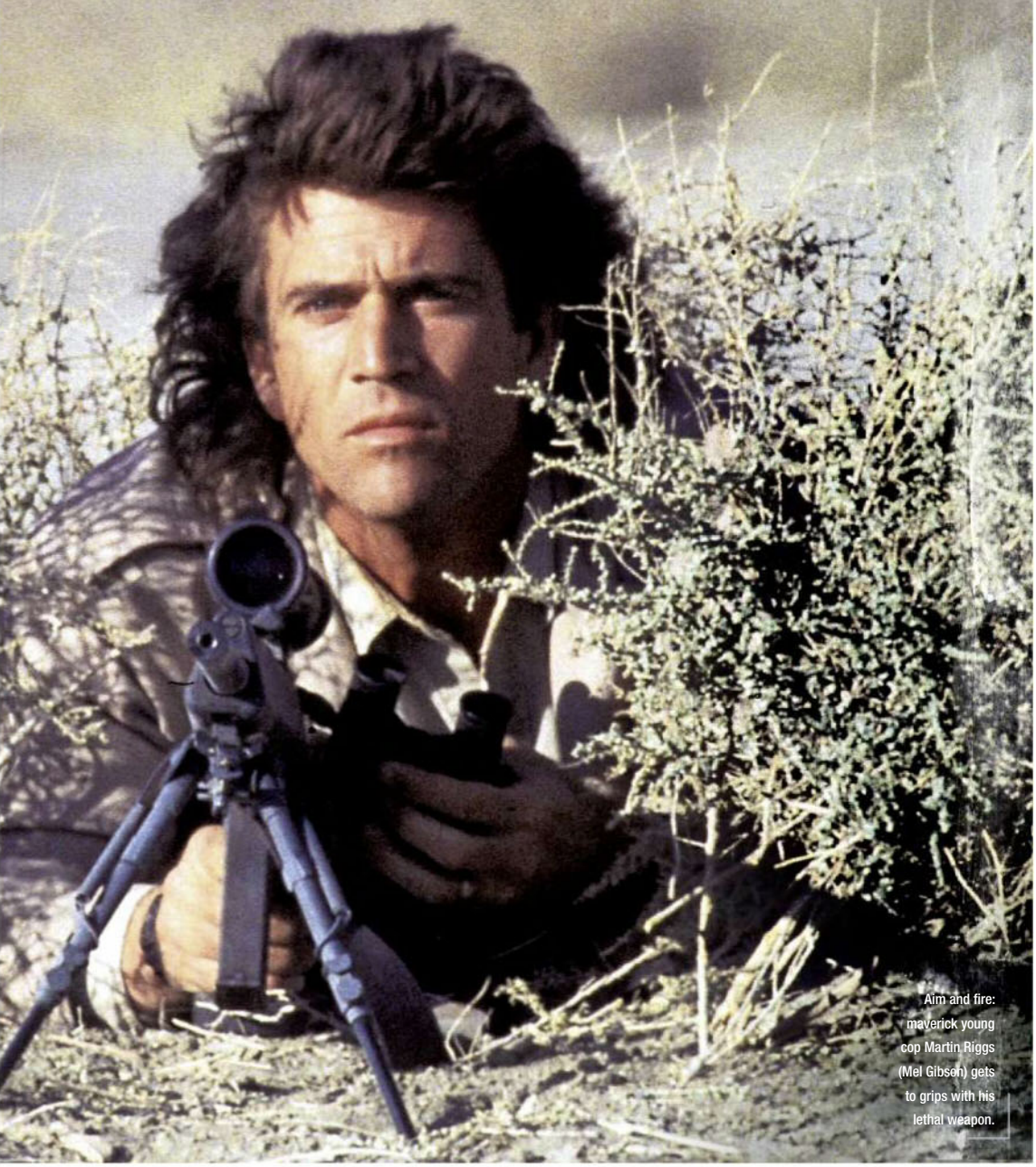
A blend of action-thriller, character drama and black comedy, in which LAPD vet Roger Murtaugh (Danny Glover) is reluctantly teamed with suicidal maverick Martin Riggs (Mel Gibson), *Lethal Weapon* announced Black as a prodigious new talent. He drew on a number of influences for a debut which proved a potent taste of things to come. "I'd always been a fan of noir cop thrillers," he says. "They used to show heavily edited movies after Monday Night Football and I'd watch them on our tiny little TV set."

It was in this shrunken form that Black first encountered Don Siegel's *Dirty Harry*. "I was transfixed," he says. "The humour in *Lethal Weapon* all came from *Dirty Harry*." Western mythology also played a part, specifically the gentrification of the West and the gunslinger's increasing redundancy. "*Lethal Weapon* to me," he says, "is about this figure who comes back from the war damaged, who did things he's not particularly proud of and who is then reviled for them. Society's attitude is: 'We're safe now, and you're a monster.' But he knows the West is not gentrified, the evil is coming back. And when it does, they need the old gunslinger. They will have to let the monster out of his cage."

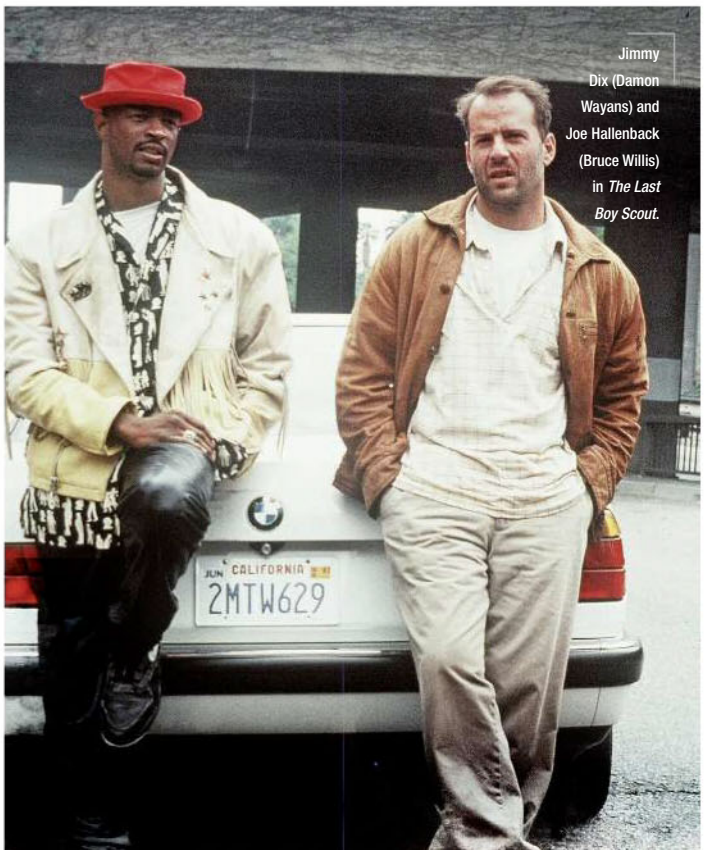
Lethal Weapon was itself a monster. Earning a cool $65 million just from its initial US release, it ushered in a whole new era of smart, self-aware action movies and launched Black's remarkable career trajectory.



The Monster Squad: Phoebe (Ashley Bank) and 'friend' (Tom Noonan).



Aim and fire: maverick young cop Martin Riggs (Mel Gibson) gets to grips with his lethal weapon.



Jimmy Dix (Damon Wayans) and Joe Hallenback (Bruce Willis) in *The Last Boy Scout*.

THE MONSTER SQUAD
(1987)

The golden boy after *Lethal Weapon*, Black was given free rein, and rather than follow up with another buddy-cop movie, he elected to revive this *Goonies*-style kids' caper he and Fred Dekker had written in the early '80s. Featuring Frankenstein's Monster, Dracula and The Mummy, it was inspired by one of Black's favourite movies: *Abbott And Costello Meet Frankenstein*. "The reason being," he says, "is that they are as funny as ever, but the menace is played straight. Basically, we wanted to do *Our Gang* (*bunch of mischievous scamps created by Hal Roach*), and play the horror for real."

Though it now enjoys an afterlife on the midnight movie circuit, *Monster Squad* didn't scare up much business on its release, earning less than $4 million in the US. Neither was it a hit with critics ("Neither scary nor funny," was *TV Guide*'s verdict) "It was a bomb," says Black, bluntly. Significantly, he has not strayed far from the crime genre since. Although, soon after, he was surprised to find himself struggling in that area, too.

THE LAST BOY SCOUT
(1991)

According to legend, Black backed out of *Lethal Weapon 2* because he'd originally wanted Riggs to die at the end of the first film. "That was only part of it," he says. He did turn in a draft of the sequel, but, "the mandate came down from the studio: 'More comedy.' I didn't want to do that. I *couldn't* do that." The film was rewritten by Jeffrey Boam; Black, who received 'story' and 'characters' credits, turned his attention to *The Last Boy Scout*, another mismatched buddy movie in which a washed-up secret service agent (Bruce Willis) teams up with a disgraced football star (Damon Wayans) to bust a gambling syndicate.

It was a notoriously troubled project. Joel Silver described it as "one of the three worst experiences of my life", while director Tony Scott claimed Willis hijacked the movie, demanding extensive re-writes from Black on pain of his being fired.

"I don't think that's what really happened," says Black. "They were facing tremendous pressure from the studio to have this be a follow-up to *Die Hard*. Bruce wasn't happy, and I was under pressure to make the movie bigger. There was no mention in my original script of a giant football stadium or riding a horse onto the field in the middle of a game. It's an odd mix, and I think what works best is not the bravura action but scenes like the one where Bruce asks the guy for a cigarette, then punches and kills him."

Despite the strain and the curate's egg that resulted, *The Last Boy Scout* did leave Black with fond memories of the late, great Tony Scott. "One of my favourite people," he says. "Endlessly inspirational. A young writer once went to him and said, 'I just came from the studio, they're fucking with my movie, they're bringing in another guy, they're taking the money away. I'm fighting like crazy.' Tony looked at him and said, 'Yeah. It's great isn't it?'"

Scott later admitted that Black's original *Boy Scout* script, a taut neo-noir packed with wise-ass dialogue and bone-cracking violence, was better than the movie he made of it. He was being generous. What hurt *The Last Boy Scout*,

which was a hit but not a big one, was Hollywood's inexplicable habit of paying top dollar for a script ($1.75 million in this case) then mutilating everything that made it attractive in the first place. It's a practice that still baffles Black. "They paid me a lot of money for *Boy Scout*," he says. "And I did more rewrites on it than any other movie I've ever done. The studio just wanted it to fit a marketing template they'd already established. They wanted another *Die Hard*. It's not a bad movie, but it *is* the movie that made me decide I should direct someday."

That ambition, magnificently realised down the line, had to wait, as Black embarked on what he reasoned would surely be the biggest movie of his career so far.

LAST ACTION HERO (1993)

Extremely Violent, a cool, R-rated pastiche of high-octane '80s action movies, sadly ended up as the bloated, tone-deaf PG-13 cop-out that was *Last Action Hero*. Unlike *Lethal Weapon 2*, it was Black who was doing the rewriting.

"When I came in, there was a script by Zak Penn and Adam Leff," says Black. "I liked the premise (*young film fan is transported to the world of his favourite star's latest movie*), but I thought it was small in scope. Our first draft, everyone loved. Arnold (*Schwarzenegger*) said it was one of the best scripts he'd ever read."

Director John McTiernan loved it too, but still made extensive changes, amends that, in Black's view, dragged the movie down and blunted its comic edge. "It became more heady," he says, "kind of pretentious rather than the comedy it needed to be. I'm not saying we (*he and co-writer David Arnott*) could've saved it, but we spent a lot of time making it funny and none of the jokes made it in. We were fired after an argument with John. Then Carrie Fisher did a pass because the studio wanted a woman's perspective. William Goldman did two drafts; the joke was that the producer's gardener did a draft. Zak blames me for everything. To this day he cites all the things he hates about it. What he doesn't understand is that I didn't like them either."

The project's cardinal sin, according to Black, was its insufferable smugness. "There was a theatrical trailer where you see some action and then Arnold comes on and says, 'Not yet!' and shuts the door on the audience. I remember thinking, 'Boy, this better play.'" It didn't, and was famously savaged both by critics, and at the box office by *Jurassic Park*.



Arnold Schwarzenegger as Jack Slater in *Last Action Hero*.


The Long Kiss Goodnight: Geena Davis teams up with Samuel L. Jackson.

Beneath all the bombast of *Last Boy Scout*, there is clearly a Shane Black movie struggling to get out. *Last Action Hero*, on the other hand, bears not a trace of his signature style. His next project was to be a different matter entirely.

THE LONG KISS GOODNIGHT (1996)

A noirish action-thriller starring Geena Davis as an amnesiac schoolteacher whose past life as a trained assassin comes flooding back after a concussion, this crackles with Black's primary influences: private-eye novels, crime fiction and spy movies. It earned Black $4 million, a record-breaking figure for a spec script.

Like *The Last Boy Scout*, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* would attract a cult following, but when it tanked in the States on release (only grossing $33 million), the backlash was vicious and Black took the brunt of it. "Black has not only exploited the system, he has laid it to waste," wrote *Variety* editor Peter Bart in a scathing article. "I was painted as epitomising everything crass and over-indulgent about Hollywood," says Black.

Stung by the personal attacks and becoming jaded with the action genre, Black took a sabbatical. "I was in the spotlight," he says. "And it was all about the money. I didn't *care* about the money, I just wanted to tell stories, be a better writer, try new things. And I wanted out of the spotlight." He got what he wanted. Black disappeared, becoming "invisible", as he puts it, for nine years — time he says that "went by in a blur". He resurfaced to a changed world. Four million-dollar paychecks were a thing of the past, and the days when executives read his scripts by invitation only were long gone.





Two-bit crook Harry Lockhart (Robert Downey Jr.) gets a hand in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang.*

KISS KISS BANG BANG
(2005)

He might have been invisible for those nine years, but Black was not entirely idle. In the spirit of trying new things, he began writing a romantic comedy. The first 40 pages had promise, he recalls, but then it meandered into darker territory. Black's friend, writer-director James L. Brooks (*Terms Of Endearment*, *As Good As it Gets*) advised him that it was going wildly astray. "I was crushed," says Black, "but I didn't want to give in. Then I was talking to Jim one night about how much we both love *Chinatown* and I thought, 'I bet I can finish this if I make it a murder mystery.' I added a detective, Gay Perry, and a series of murders and *voilà*. Cut to no-one wanting it."

The difficulty Black had peddling *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* was not only due to his prolonged hiatus. Convinced only *he* could handle the material's hyperactive comedy-action-drama mix, and tired of ceding control of scripts he'd slaved over to others, he was determined to direct it himself.

"Doors slammed all over town," he says. "In the end, I took it to Joel (*Silver*), who loved it and supported me as director." Even with Silver's weight behind it, it took a further year-and-a-half before Warner Bros. agreed to fund the project for $15 million, a pittance compared to previous Black projects. Luckily, for such a trifling sum, Warner Bros. was happy for Black to take the reins.

What emerged was a serpentine, tongue-in-cheek crime-comedy featuring an inspired double act from Robert Downey Jr. and Val Kilmer as, respectively, a crook-turned-actor and a gay private eye embroiled in a murder case. It not only marked Black's triumphant return, but also a new phase in his career. Every script he's written since, he's also been attached to as director.

"I wish I could say it was difficult," he says on directing for the first time. "But it was fantastic; Val and Downey just clicked. Nothing to do with me. You give Downey a playground, he'll elevate your material to a point where you're claiming credit for things you never dreamed of. And Joel guided me every step of the way; my only thought was, 'I hope I get another shot because this one was a blast.'"

Since *Kiss Kiss* also helped put Downey Jr. back in the ring after his 2001 incarceration on drugs charges,

that was in the stars. Still, despite the film proving a critical and commercial hit that earned a standing ovation at Cannes, Black seemed to retreat from the spotlight once again. He began work on a script for *Doc Savage*, based on the Depression-era comic books he'd loved as a kid, and, as he puts it, "futzed around". But when he did return, it was with another bang.

IRON MAN 3 (2013)

"I get a call in the middle of the night. It's Downey Jr. 'Are you in town? Sit down, I have something for you.'" Black knew immediately that the something was *Iron Man 3*.

"I think it's the only superhero movie I would've considered doing," he says, pondering his first foray into full-on blockbuster territory, a significant move, given how highly he prizes control of his own material. "I looked at the first *Iron Man* and it occurred to me that it was very different from, say, *Thor*. I saw *Iron Man 3* as more of a Tom Clancy thriller; that was my stamp, making it into a thriller. We went to Marvel and they said, 'Okay, but we're pairing you with another writer.' I was like, 'Are you fucking kidding me?' But then when I met Drew Pearce we got on like a house on fire. We shaped the movie together, and I give him credit for most of the hilarious dialogue."

But Black still had concerns about his creative freedom, and knocked heads with Marvel Studios boss and *Iron Man* producer Kevin Feige. "Marvel are very four-quadrant," he says (i.e. they tailor their movies carefully to a global market). "You can step outside the box, but not a lot. You can take risks, but you can't take too many. In retrospect, I clashed with Kevin more out of hubris than anything. He's a very smart guy. Joss Whedon came to me halfway through and said, 'There's a point where you have to trust the machine. This doesn't look like a processed movie, your voice is there. Now trust the machine. After that, I started to listen to Kevin more and the collaboration became easier. And I was really pleased with the movie, which is what matters."

Raking in almost one-and-a-quarter billion dollars worldwide, *Iron Man 3* rocketed Black right back to the top of the A-list, allowing him to resurrect another personal project that had been gathering dust for years.



Shane Black with Robert Downey Jr. on the set of *Iron Man 3*.



Nice Guys Russell Crowe and Ryan Gosling in Shane Black's latest release.



THE NICE GUYS (2016)

Originally written in 2001, this '70s-set crime caper — "The spiritual sequel to *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*" — is the longest in the making of any of Black's movies. Over the years it was variously mooted as a CBS TV pilot, an HBO series and a vehicle for Sean Penn ("He wanted too much money," says Black).

Presumed dead and buried, it was given a new lease of life when a New Line exec casually enquired about it during a meeting for a *Long Kiss Goodnight* sequel. "People were talking about it again," says Black. "I get a call from an agent: 'How about Russell Crowe for this?' I said, 'Get me on a plane, I'll go talk to him.' That was a Thursday; I was leaving Monday. On Saturday I get a call from another agent: 'Ryan Gosling wants to do it.' After ten years, the entire movie came together in four or five days."

Featuring Crowe and Gosling as tough-talking detectives investigating the suicide of a porn star, *The Nice Guys* is, says Black, in tune with the classics of the genre: *Hickey & Boggs*, *Thunderbolt And Lightfoot*, "Even the *Pink Panther* movies," he says. "But the good ones where the bad guys were played for real."

Another double-header, *The Nice Guys* is also heavily dependent on the chemistry between its A-list leads. "You hear rumours," says Black. "These guys are tough." But again, it was a blast. Crowe is a sweetheart and Gosling is a true gentleman. I studied acting so I know how to talk to these guys; I know their vocabulary. But chemistry isn't about going for drinks after work, it's about the magic that happens when two pros get together on a set. I've never had a more pleasant experience. And, as you might've noticed, I've done a few buddy movies." We have, and there's no doubt that chemistry is something Black has mastered over the past 30 years, whether on the page or on the set. Even if it has been torture.

***THE NICE GUYS* IS OUT ON JUNE 3 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**

BET ON BLACK

MATCH THE SHANE BLACK ZINGER TO THE FILM...

1. "SHIT, WE'RE BEIN' BEAT UP BY THE INVENTOR OF SCRABBLE."

2. "EVERYONE KNOWS, WHEN YOU MAKE AN ASSUMPTION, YOU MAKE AN ASS OUT OF 'U' AND 'UMPTION'."

3. "I LOVED YOU IN *A CHRISTMAS STORY*, BY THE WAY."

4. "YEAH, YEAH SURE. ALL DRESSED UP AND NO-ONE TO BLOW."

5. "DON'T WORRY, I SAW *LORD OF THE RINGS*. I'M NOT GOING TO END THIS 17 TIMES."



A. LETHAL WEAPON



B. THE LAST BOY SCOUT



C. KISS KISS BANG BANG



D. THE LONG KISS GOODNIGHT



E. IRON MAN 3

QUIZ ANSWERS: 1B, 2D, 3E, 4A, 5C


JAMESON
EMPIRE
AWARDS
2016



CLASS OF 2016

Star Wars stars, _This Is England_ers, _Spectre_-makers… An Inspiration, a Hero and a Martian… We ask the winners how the last 12 months was for them

WORDS **OWEN WILLIAMS** PHOTOGRAPHER **SARAH DUNN**



JAMESON BEST ACTOR

MATT DAMON / *THE MARTIAN*

This isn't the first time Matt Damon has won an Empire Award. Ten years ago, he bagged the Best Actor gong for *The Bourne Supremacy*, and on the evening of our 2016 show, he's rushed in straight from a relentless shooting schedule, playing Jason Bourne again. But he's here to pick up for a very different role this time around: stranded astronaut Mark Watney in *The Martian*, a character who plays to Damon's nice-guy strengths, staying chipper in the face of even the most extreme adversity.

"It was awesome, one of the greatest experiences of my life," says Damon of working with Ridley Scott, largely on location in the Jordanian desert. "The best it gets making movies is when you have a great director who's decisive and fun and inclusive, and Ridley is all of those things." He was already in production on *The Martian* at the start of 2015, so, as he puts it, "I came charging out of the gates, and it's been really busy since."

Next Damon shoots off to work with Alexander Payne in the comedy *Downsizing*. And immediately after that he'll be starring with Josh Brolin and Julianne Moore in George Clooney's Coens-scripted *Suburbicon*. And all despite his intention to have some time off in 2016, to spend with his family.

"I've really fucked up this year," Damon laughs. "But George is in LA, so at least I'll be able to be at home for that one. I swore I wasn't taking another job, but when George calls it's very different. He's like a member of our family. The whole family said yes to that one."





BEST BRITISH FILM

SPECTRE / SAM MENDES

Spectre, for Sam Mendes, marked the end of a brutally busy five years. Or, in his own words, "a five-year adventure that I've loved every second of". Since 2011, he's directed two massive Bond films and somehow still found time to deliver *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* and a heavyweight *King Lear* to the London stage. And been a guest editor of this very magazine, too — which, he says, was one of the high points of the whole *Spectre* process. Yes, apparently up there with shooting for seven months in five countries and casually pulling off the biggest explosion in cinematic history.

The most important thing the past year has taught him, he says, has been to keep trying new things and not let the ambition slip. "I think in Mexico City, the first ten minutes of *Spectre*, I felt I was being really ambitious and I loved doing it," he reflects. "It was interesting that the most ambitious section was the one I was most proud of."

Still, he insists, his time with Bond is now definitely done. Though he isn't sure if the same can be said for Daniel Craig. "It did feel to me like he was saying goodbye to Bond at the end," he says, "but there's clearly a way he can easily come back. He needs to have a break and do another role and see how he feels after that. I'll be watching with as much interest as you guys."



BEST COMEDY

SPY / PETER SERAFINOWICZ

British comedian Peter Serafinowicz has steadily been infiltrating Hollywood, with a keen eye for scene-stealing small roles in big movies (*Muppets Most Wanted*, *Guardians Of The Galaxy*). This year, he's picking up *Empire*'s Best Comedy Award for Paul Feig's *Spy*, the secret agent spoof that thrived on improvisation.

"You stick to the script and do the scene a couple of times, and then Paul Feig and his co-writer will come over with a little Post-it and say, 'Why don't you try saying this…' I could also pitch lines to Paul, and he would mostly say, 'Ehhhh.'"

You'll recall that Serafinowicz played Aldo, the broadly Italian secret agent who is the contact for Melissa McCarthy's Susan Cooper in the field. "The first scene I did with Melissa, she started crying. I asked her if she was okay and she said, 'I'm acting, you dummy!' I think they cut that out. Some eagle-eyed editor spotted it."

Serafinowicz continues to juggle bigger international projects with home-grown messing around, most recently co-starring with Michael Caine in Zach Braff's crime comedy *Going In Style*, a caper flick about three old guys who rob a bank. "I play Michael Caine's errant son-in-law, and that was fucking brilliant," he says of Caine. "He's a great raconteur."

He's also in *John Wick 2*, and the future holds superhero spoof *The Tick*, in which he plays the man in the silly blue suit. Plus, don't rule out the return of Aldo. "I think there's going to be another *Spy*. Even if I just make it myself on a little camera."



BEST SCI-FI/FANTASY

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS / ANTHONY DANIELS

"Last year was a bit of a whirlwind," says the man best known as the galaxy's prissiest protocol droid. "It definitely got a bit hectic towards the end. After the *Force Awakens* premiere in London, I was actually thrilled to get on with Christmas and do nothing!"

Forty years after he first squeezed himself into C-3PO's golden armour, *Star Wars* continues to dictate a vast percentage of Daniels' working life. Not that he is really complaining — Daniels self-avowedly "loves attention" and is delighted to share the credit when he collects the Best Sci-Fi/Fantasy Award, which unsurprisingly went to the biggest and most anticipated movie of last year. Though he knows who truly deserves the most attention.

"You've got to recognise J.J. Abrams as a remarkable man," he says. "To have the balls to take on the mantle of *Star Wars* is incredible." Abrams, insists Daniels, is "a genius in the way that George Lucas was a genius", the kind who, for all their own vision and drive, makes everyone on their team feel valued. "I've worked with so many people who could make you feel very, very small. But he made it so lively and fun for everybody. And everybody on the crew was a fan. Wherever they were in the hierarchy, they were invested in it, and it just shows. The film he came up with was joyful, and everybody was ready for it."





EMPIRE HERO

STANLEY TUCCI

Collecting 2016's Empire Hero Award, Stanley Tucci modestly says it's an accolade for something he only pretends to be. "Real heroes are actually real people who do heroic things," he explains. "I think somebody like Malala (*Yousafzai*) is a hero to all of us. And anybody working with refugees… Doctors Without Borders is an incredible organisation. Nobody in our business is a hero. I'm kidding! But I'll pretend to be one tonight and hope I do it well."

Tucci keeps incredibly busy — although he says the truly craziest bits of the past 12 months have been "any given moment with our one-year-old". His eclectic 2015 took in the Best Picture Oscar winner *Spotlight* playing Mitchell Garabedian, the attorney who urged the Spotlight team to investigate allegations of child sex abuse amongst the priesthood, zombie-horror *Patient Zero*, ITV's *Peter & Wendy* (in which he was Captain Hook) and Disney's live action re-boot *Beauty And The Beast*, in which he plays a new character — grand piano Cadenza. "My approach to my work is to just inundate the market as much as possible," he laughs.

Currently, he's in post-production on *Final Portrait*: a biopic of the Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti, which he has written and directed but will not star in. Instead, Geoffrey Rush will play the title role alongside Armie Hammer and Clémence Poésy. "My dad was an art teacher, so I was brought up in that world," Tucci tells us. "Now he, my dad, is a great, great guy. He's always my hero."



BEST MALE NEWCOMER

JOHN BOYEGA / *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS*

What's Christmas like when you go home and you're now known worldwide as a main character in *Star Wars*? "It was the best ever!" laughs John Boyega, *The Force Awakens*' Finn and *Empire*'s Best Male Newcomer for 2016. "Family, friends, and these happy times. It's good times!"

It's a huge step up from his debut in Joe Cornish's *Attack The Block* in 2011: a more lo-fi kind of sci-fi in which he played the plucky Moses, fighting off an alien invasion in London. Roles in *Becoming Human*, *24* and *Imperial Dreams* followed, among others, but last year was dominated by *Episode VII*, which saw Boyega helping to bring back the saga's lighter touch with his relatable turn as the young Stormtrooper who finds his conscience.

"It's been an interesting year," he says. "Going round the world, meeting new people and having *Star Wars* come out… it was nuts!" On stage, he thanked director J.J. Abrams for his support during the gruelling seven-month audition process, while appealing to never be put through anything like that again. It was all worth it, though, he assures us.

Somehow, last autumn Boyega found time to fit in James Ponsoldt's near-future dystopian drama *The Circle*, based on Dave Eggers' novel and starring Tom Hanks. But his immediate future is obviously subsumed by *Star Wars Episode VIII*, for which Rian Johnson has picked up the reins. "I can't tell you much," Boyega says, "but what I can say, is that Rian is working *so* hard. He's come on to the project with a fresh take on things, and he's really impressive."

In a world exclusive, he gives us a line of *Episode VIII* dialogue: "*Ooja mooka vishi…*" That's phonetic, though, he points out. He isn't sure how you spell it.



BEST FEMALE NEWCOMER

DAISY RIDLEY / *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS*

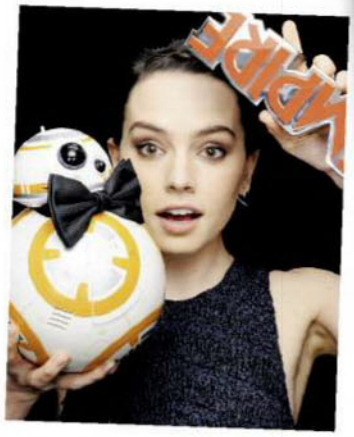
Best Newcomers rarely come as new as Daisy Ridley. A couple of short films and an episode of *Casualty* mark the start of her screen CV a mere two-and-a-half years ago. Now, she not only has a role in last year's biggest blockbuster, she was also revealed as *Episode VII*'s lead Force-wielder: inheritor, no less, of Anakin Skywalker's lightsaber.

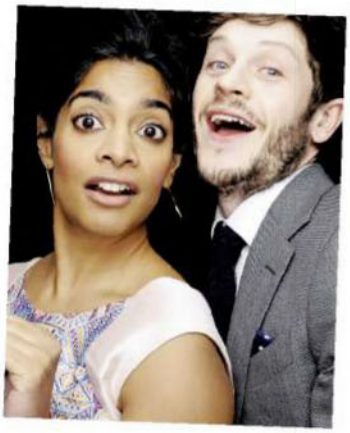
Not that she's losing her head, or anything. With admirable nonchalance, Ridley tells us the past year or so "hasn't been that crazy", mainly thanks to the head-down nature of actually getting *The Force Awakens* made. It wasn't until the last few months of the year, when the film was unveiled, that things went properly bonkers. "But it settled down quite quickly," she shrugs. "Now we're filming *Episode VIII*, so it's like the *VII* time again. Except now people know a third of the story."

Of Rian Johnson's instalment, due in December 2017, Ridley says we can expect, amid the drama, at least as much humour as we saw in *The Force Awakens*. Which is not to say the stakes aren't high — for either Rey, or Ridley herself. "Before, I had a responsibility to myself and to the script," she explains. "Now I feel I have a responsibility to everyone who felt a connection with the character. I don't necessarily think there's *more* pressure, but there are definitely expectations that now have to be fulfilled."

Away from *Star Wars*, Ridley has another action-adventure franchise to consider. In recent weeks there have been rumours that she might be in line to replace Angelina Jolie as treasure-hunter Lara Croft in the developing *Tomb Raider* reboot. "Everyone seems to be excited about the idea," she says carefully. "I don't think there's a script yet, but there have been conversations…"





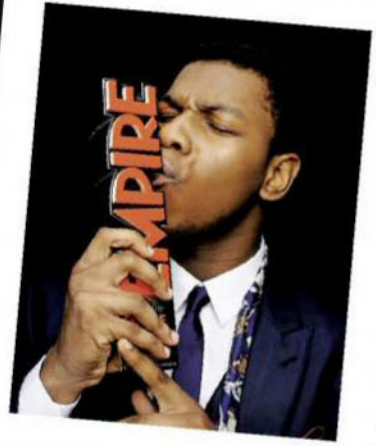










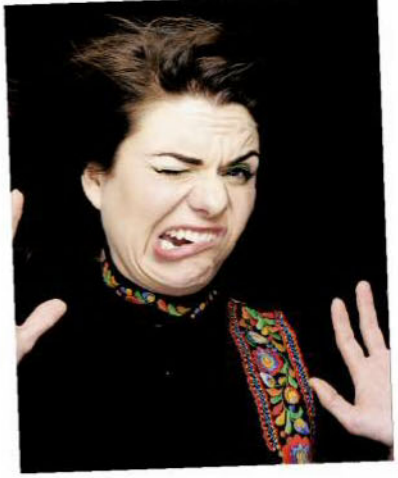




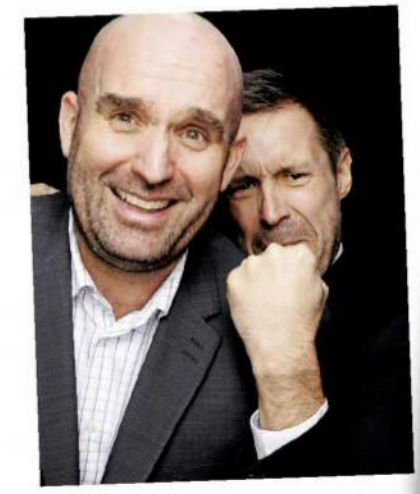




REPUBLIC OF PHOTOGRAPHY

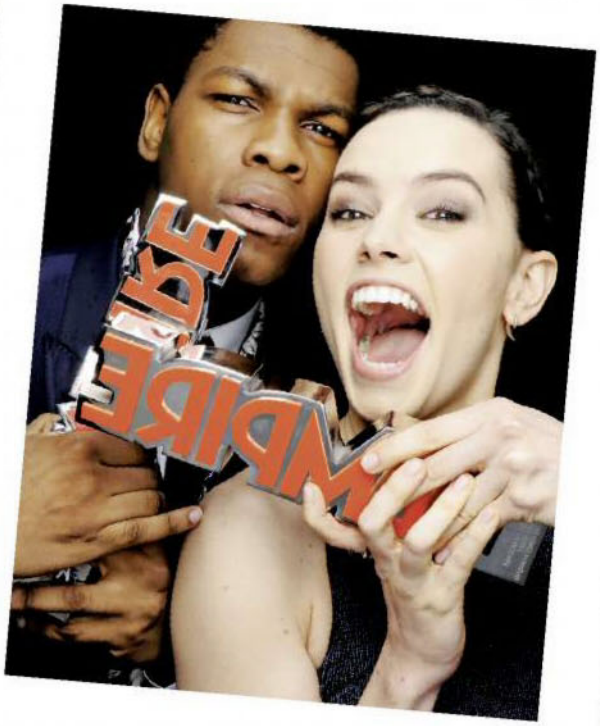






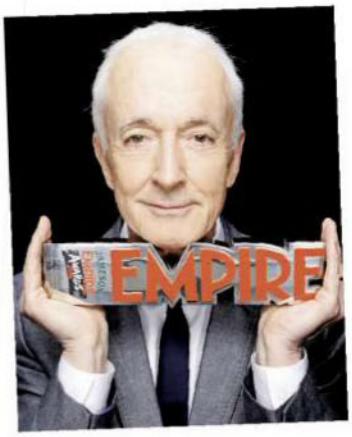
















BEST OF THE BOOTH

Strip one: Host David Walliams, Daisy Ridley, Amara Karan and Iwan Rheon, Hannah Murray and Craig Roberts. Strip two: Andy Serkis, Sam Mendes, Jonathan Ross, *The Hallow* winners, Richard E. Grant. Strip three: John Boyega, Peter Serafinowicz, Daniel Mays, *Spectre* writers Robert Wade and Neal Purvis. Strip 4: Caitlin Moran, The *This Is England '90* gang, Shane Meadows and Paddy Considine, Corin Hardy and Joseph Mawle. Strip 4: Paddy Considine, Daisy Ridley and John Boyega, Matt Damon. Strip 5: Anthony Daniels, Stanley Tucci and Miranda Richardson, Katherine Ryan.

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EMPIRE INSPIRATION

PADDY CONSIDINE

"I did some nice work last year," says Paddy Considine, with a smile. It may seem like an understatement, but for Considine, it really means something. As inspiring as he's been over the years, whether blowing us away in *Dead Man's Shoes* or deftly crafting under-the-skin drama in his directorial debut *Tyrannosaur*, he's always been unafraid to critique his own output and highlight work with which he remains dissatisfied (of 2011's *Blitz*, he says, "If I hadn't had to pay the mortgage, I wouldn't have done that fucker"). By "some nice work", he means the BBC's much-lauded *Peaky Blinders*, which Considine has joined for its third season as a corrupt churchman, and thriller *The Girl With All The Gifts*, which he shot last year with director Colm McCarthy (see page 26).

More significantly, though, there's boxing drama *Journeyman*, Considine's follow-up to *Tyrannosaur*, which he's writing and directing, and, unlike *Tyrannosaur*, starring in, too. "I've just finished the first two weeks and I'm back on it tomorrow," he says. "It's been brilliant. A challenge like writing and directing and acting in a film is something I'd have run away from years ago, but now I just felt it was time to stop hiding and get on with it."

Given the amount of work he's now willing to take on, it's not surprising to learn that among Considine's own inspirations, he singles out Guided By Voices' creative force, Robert Pollard, one of the most prolific songwriters working today. And there clearly remains great affection for his fellow award-winner Shane Meadows (see page 96). "It's great to catch up with him," he says of the friend he's known since drama school, and his three-time director (Considine won Best British Actor at the 2005 Empire Awards for their second film together, *Dead Man's Shoes*). "We don't see each other that often anymore, so that's made tonight even greater."



BEST TV SERIES

***THIS IS ENGLAND '90* / SHANE MEADOWS**

"I'm not completely ruling out more," says Shane Meadows of *This Is England*, the tragi-comic trio of TV series that grew out of his 2006 film. It's been an eventful few years, following Shaun, Lol, Woody and co. through '86, '88 and the now Empire Award-winning '90, and the writer-director still clearly has enough affection for the characters that he isn't definitively saying goodbye.

His *This Is England '90* saw off the likes of *Game Of Thrones*, *Daredevil*, *Fargo* and *Jessica Jones* to nab the top TV prize, its gut-punching drama, humour and pathos resonating far beyond just those who remember shoegazing. The intimacy between the cast is tangible, a camaraderie keenly felt behind the camera.

"The maddest moment last year was doing a lie detector test on Andrew Shim," Meadows laughs. "I told him the insurance company [for the series] had found out he'd been done for driving offences and wanted to interview him on camera. An actual police officer did it as a wind-up. He had no idea..."

The video will appear on a tenth anniversary *This Is England* DVD release Meadows is currently working on. He also reveals Empire Inspiration winner Paddy Considine was cut out of *England '90* and the scenes will appear as an extra. Next up, feature-wise, is a biopic of cyclist Tom Simpson, who in the 1960s became the first Brit to lead the Tour de France.

"It's been a few years since I got my teeth into a dramatic eight-week feature shoot," Meadows enthuses. "Fingers crossed we can kick it off and make a good one!"

EMPIRE LEGEND

ALAN RICKMAN 1946-2016

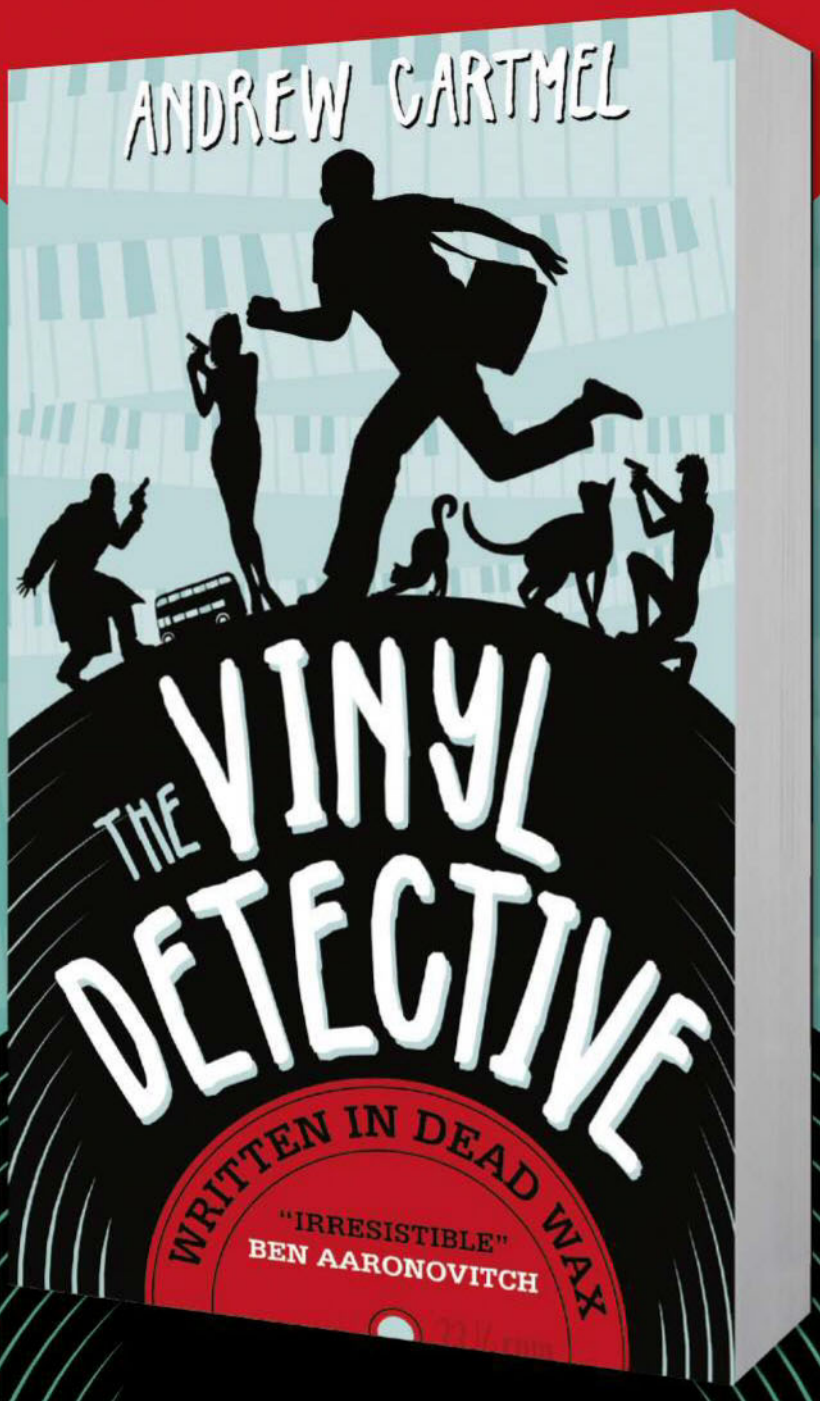
More so than any of the previous winners of this award, this year's Empire Legend Award is a heartfelt tribute from the *Empire* staff to an actor who touched us all with his extraordinary career, before he was taken, far too soon, in January.

It all began for Alan Rickman, on the big screen at least, with *Die Hard*. A huge success as a stage actor, he avoided the movies until, at the age of 41, John McTiernan cast him as Hans Gruber, the suave German terrorist exchanging one-liners and bullets with Bruce Willis' barefooted cop. He was a revelation, crafting a villain so wicked, so witty, so wonderfully debonair that you almost wanted him to beat the hero and get away with it.

After *Die Hard*, there were other villains, of course. He won a BAFTA for threatening to cut people's hearts out with spoons in *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*. And his dark, brooding, malevolent Severus Snape lingered like a cloud through eight generation-defining *Harry Potter* movies. But there was so much more to him than simply playing the bad guy, no matter how good he was at it. He was hilarious as a Shakespearean actor slumming it in *Galaxy Quest*. Heartbreaking as a husband considering an affair in *Love Actually*. Tender as a ghost learning to let go of the love of his life in *Truly Madly Deeply*. He could do anything, and he did it all with one of the greatest voices on the planet.

Not a day goes by in the *Empire* office without one of us reciting his many screen lines, more often than not the immensely quotable Hans Gruber. It is tremendously sad that he cannot accept this award in person. We might even have quoted *Die Hard* to his face.

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BEST HORROR

THE HALLOW / CORIN HARDY

The special-effects specialist-turned-writer/director's award for his creepy and monstrously inventive debut movie comes, Corin Hardy admits, at the end of a fraught week. It's been reported he's finally parted ways with the movie he spent much of last year prepping: the remake of *The Crow*. Though, he says, it's "a complicated situation" that actually isn't over. "*The Crow*, its story and that character, remains something I'm so passionate about. There are still certain things in play, so we shall see…" In the meantime, Hardy says, he has other, original projects he's been developing, including his long-dreamed-of Yeti thriller *Refuge*. "I can't say too much," he teases, "but there's a lot going on."

The Hallow itself was filmed towards the end of 2014, and when he wasn't working on *The Crow*, Hardy's 2015 was taken up by its gradual international roll-out. The Jameson Empire Awards 2016, happily but accidentally, coincides with *The Hallow*'s release on DVD, making the night, he feels, the ideal conclusion to the long story of his debut. "The lesson I learned from making it, and subsequently over the last 12 months, is about making the choice from your gut instinct to work with good people," he tells us, citing in particular the film's star, Joseph Mawle, who joined him on stage.

As for the conclusion to his rough week? An Empire Award, he says with a smile, "makes this week kind of alright".

THE WINNERS IN FULL

Best Film
presented by Sky Movies
The Revenant

Jameson Best Actor
Matt Damon (*The Martian*)

Best Female Newcomer
presented by the Forever Hope Foundation
Daisy Ridley (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens*)

Best British Film
presented by
The Hollywood Reporter
Spectre

Best Sci-Fi/Fantasy
Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Best Thriller
presented by Corinthia Hotel London
Spectre

Best Screenplay
The Big Short

Best Documentary
Amy

Best TV Series
presented by Wuaki.tv
This Is England '90

Best Game
presented by the Forever Hope Foundation
Batman: Arkham Knight

Done In 60 Seconds
Marc Coleman (*Legend*)

Best Soundtrack
Mad Max: Fury Road

Empire Legend
Alan Rickman

Best Director
presented by Vue Entertainment
J. J. Abrams (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens*)

Best Actress
Alicia Vikander (*The Danish Girl*)

Best Male Newcomer
John Boyega (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens*)

Best Comedy
presented by Absolute Radio
Spy

Best Horror
The Hallow

Best Animated Film
Inside Out

Best Short Film
presented by Jameson Irish Whiskey
World Of Tomorrow

Best Costume Design
Mad Max: Fury Road

Best Production Design
Mad Max: Fury Road

Best Make-Up And Hairstyling
Mad Max: Fury Road

Best Visual Effects
Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Empire Inspiration
presented by Jameson Irish Whiskey
Paddy Considine

Empire Hero
Stanley Tucci

Special Thanks

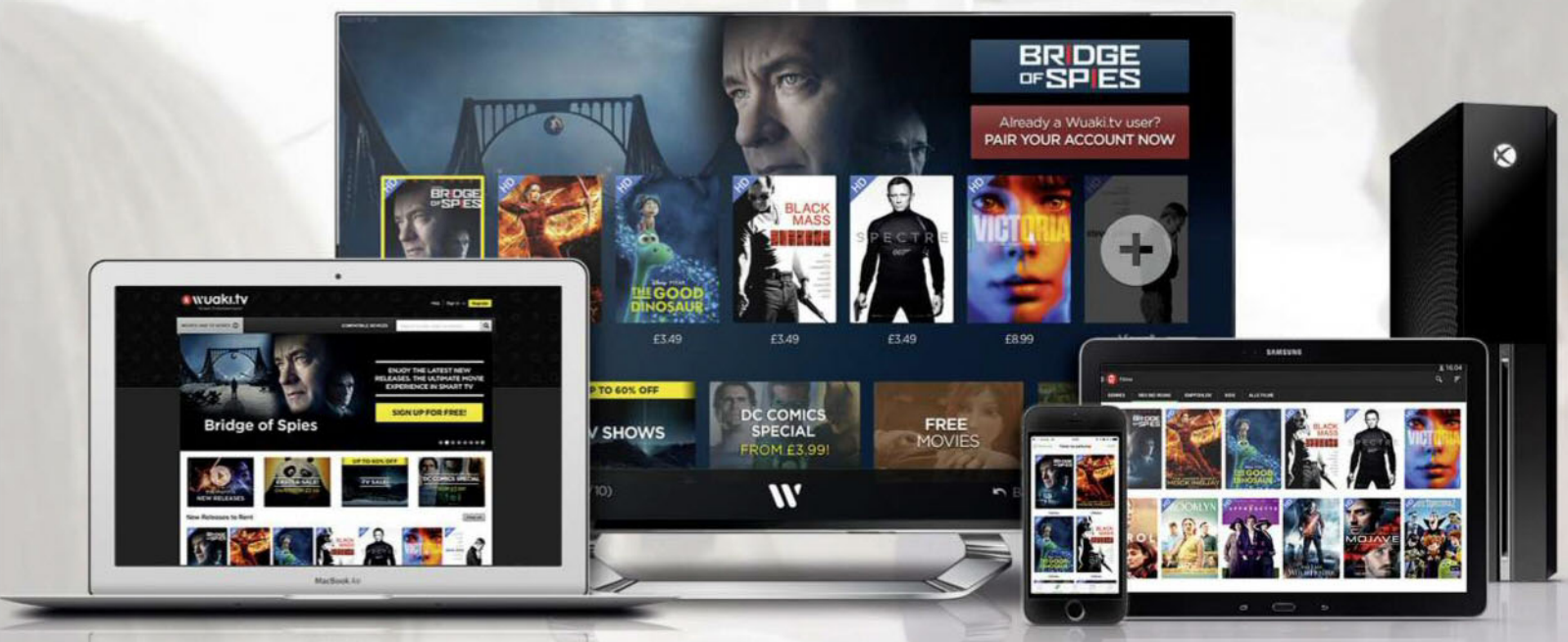
Anna Malmhake, Dan Lundberg, Juliette Yung, Stuart Moffett & all at Jameson. All at Vue Entertainment. All at Heineken. Geraldine Coyle and all at Scenario. All at Sky Movies. Amjad Khaled, Stefan Poleon and all the Forever Hope Foundation team, supporting young talent in entertainment, sport and tech. Harriet Hines, Paul Sylvester and all at Absolute Radio. Alison Smith and all at *The Hollywood Reporter*. All at The Coca-Cola Company and all at Schweppes. Thomas M. Fischer, Antony Rush & all at Corinthia Hotel London. Simon Homent, Vincent Petersen and all at Wuaki.tv. An extra thank you to Audi for chauffeuring the night's guests in style.

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THE ART

From online universe to epic big-screen fantasy: director **Duncan Jones** and



OF WAR

his crew discuss the tricky business of *Warcraft* world-building WORDS **DAN JOLIN**

DUNCAN JONES WAS ALWAYS A WARRIOR.

He'd wear the heaviest armour, strap on a shield and, as he fondly recalls, "just stand out front and whack things". His business partner and producer, Stuart Fenegan, preferred to be a paladin, smiting his foes with holy power. Bill Westenhofer, appropriately enough for an Oscar-winning visual-effects supervisor, was a fireball-hurling mage. And British actor Robert Kazinsky, the most dedicated Warcrafter of all the cast and crew of *Warcraft*, favoured the runesword-wielding death knight. "I was in the top ten DPS for my class for three years straight during *Wrath Of The Lich King*," he tells *Empire* proudly.

If that last sentence made complete sense to you, then you are likely as excited about the imminent arrival of Jones' adaptation of Blizzard's 22 year-old computer-gaming property as the five-and-a-half million other subscribers currently enjoying its *World Of Warcraft*. If not, then Jones and his team, including producer Charles Roven, a veteran of adaptations of kids' cartoons (*Scooby-Doo*), TV shows (*Get Smart*) and comic books (*The Dark Knight*), are just as keen to attract you to their ambitious cinematic interpretation. "You have to make sure you appeal to some people who don't know anything about the game," notes Roven.

This is a great deal more than a straightforward video-game adaptation. *World Of Warcraft* is an evolving online universe whose core location, Azeroth, is deeply familiar to the numerous players (peaking in 2010 at 12 million) who have each spent hour upon hour exploring its exotic, out-sized environments, soaking up its detailed lore, encountering its greatest heroes and villains and even, at one point, experiencing a full-on, worldwide cataclysm. It is a culturally pervasive phenomenon that has engendered fierce loyalty from those it's hooked. When we met on set in April 2014, Kazinsky admitted to clocking around 480 *days* of playtime in Azeroth since its launch in 2004, though that's not abnormal for a committed player; some devotees claim to have logged more than 1,000.

As Fenegan says, "*Warcraft* isn't a game in which you have a character that you follow through a linear story. It's a *world*, where you're playing as a character you've created yourself, that you've chosen to become a part of and invest your life in."

And that goes for the *Warcraft* movie-makers, too — at least in terms of life-investment. The translation from online to big screen was a process, at times painful, that would take an entire decade to complete.

LORE AND CHAOS

When Jones joined *Warcraft* in January 2013, it was reeling from the aftershocks of its own cataclysm. Director Sam Raimi, who'd been attached since July 2009, had suddenly quit in July 2012. Together with writer Robert Rodat, he'd worked up an original script centred on a human protagonist of their own creation, but, as Raimi told Vulture in March 2013, Blizzard revealed it "had never quite approved the original story we pitched them... We basically had to start over."

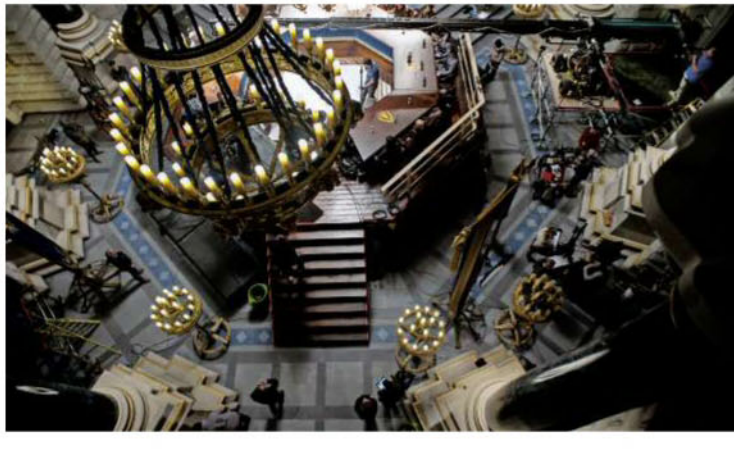
Chris Metzen, Blizzard's Senior Vice President Of Story And Franchise Development, explains their concern was the average moviegoer who knew nothing of *Warcraft*, with its multifarious cultures and species and mythologies, would "just be thrown into this insanely detailed world, and unable to relate to anything." A frustrated Raimi walked, and three years' hard work had been for naught. The entire project required a reboot.

Working together with Legendary Pictures' Jillian Share and Roven's Atlas Entertainment, Blizzard had to look back through 18 years of material, and once more figure out, as Metzen puts it, "Where are we gonna plant a camera for a feature?" They returned to a concept Blizzard itself had favoured as early as 2006: to strip it all back to the franchise's birth with 1994 strategy game *Orcs & Humans*, which concerned that first-contact conflagration where the brutish, alien orcs arrive in the human lands of Azeroth following the destruction of their own world, Draenor.

Legendary hired *Blood Diamond*









writer Charles Leavitt to work up a treatment, but while this concept simplified the world, there was still the problem of perspective. Leavitt's script was, as Share describes it, "human-centric". But, according to Metzen, Blizzard wanted to give equal weighting to the orc side of the story, which met with resistance. "The conventional thinking from the production group was, 'People aren't gonna understand these orcs, they're too alien, they're too weird. Let's just focus on the human side of things.'"

It was Jones who would break the impasse, and provide what Roven describes as "the missing ingredient". As Metzen recalls, the first day the *Moon* and *Source Code* director met with Blizzard, Legendary and Atlas, he said, "'I see this as 50/50 red and blue, Alliance and Horde. We need to be as invested with the orcs.'" Metzen's contingent "raised our hands in the air and gave a great cry of joy. We knew he was our guy."

So Jones worked on Leavitt's treatment and now, just as players of *Warcraft* can choose to become a hero of either the human-led Alliance or the orc-driven Horde, so viewers of the adaptation will find protagonists on both sides: human champion Anduin Lothar (*Vikings*' Travis Fimmel), and Durotan, chief of the peace-seeking Frostwolf Tribe (Toby Kebbell). Jones found, he says, "room to express something a little bit more empathetic and 'human' about both sides." He felt that would help open the movie experience out to a broader audience, while also embodying the spirit of the source material. And for all its Tolkienesque touches, make it a whole new flavour of high-fantasy world.

Now all he had to do was build it.

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Though many of *Warcraft*'s environments would be digitally rendered, Jones required that as many sets as possible be constructed for real, to be physically populated by both his human cast and his performance-captured orcs. It is important to Jones that, for all its fantasy, his film should have a sense of tactility and veracity.

"Fortunately, I got to be on a few film sets as a kid," he says. "I was on *Labyrinth* and *Absolute Beginners* (*both starring his late father, David Bowie*), and both of those had big city environments where they actually built streets you could walk around and look in the shops and see things in the windows. And for me, even just building a big chunk of Stormwind as a city and, again, having shops, having pubs, that to me is just so much fun. Because that's the definition of creating your own world. And though I'm obviously building a world designed by Blizzard, the opportunity to do that is something very special."

Above: In the human lands of Azeroth: Anduin Lothar (Travis Fimmel) and half-orc Garona (Paula Patton). **Left:** Director Duncan Jones getting tooled up. **Below left:** The grand interior of Stormwind Keep.

When production designer Gavin Bocquet gives *Empire* a tour of the sets scattered around Vancouver during the shoot in April 2014, he begins at Burnaby's MJA Studios, taking us through a dank dungeon draped with rusted, huge-linked chains. Then, down the road, we explore the market square of human capital Stormwind, where set dressers are busy setting up stalls and filling baskets, boxes and crates. And at the main production base of Canadian Motion Picture Park (CMPP), we watch a human-versus-orc skirmish on the volcanic no-man's land of Blackrock Valley, before being granted access to the still-under-construction "Energy Chamber" atop wizard's tower Karazhan, a huge, spherical, three-storey space with winding, grey-stone stairways where, says Bocquet's art director Dan Hermansen, a "cat-and-mouse" action scene will take place.



It all retains that distinct feel of *Warcraft* chunkiness — every environment is scaled up, from the flagstones on the floor, to the trees of the forests, to the cloud-scraping mountain ranges, to give a sense of inherent epicness. "We wanted to try to keep that scale," says Bocquet, who at one point had to construct his own forest of 12-foot-thick trees at CMPP, because even the fattest, oldest oaks in the world weren't broad enough for Jones' Elwynn Forest. "It's impressive, and bombastic, and playful, like the game," he adds, "but we had to have a grittiness — it couldn't be *that* playful. Duncan wanted it transformed into a *real* world."

WALKING AND ORCING

Jones also had to populate that world with characters just as 'real' as the environments he built, no matter how monstrous they appeared.

When Metzen was first shown footage of the principal orc character, Durotan, he was so impressed, he says, he jumped into the lap of his colleague, Blizzard lead artist Nick Carpenter. "The level of detail is just unprecedented," says Metzen, who was the first to draw the character himself, decades earlier. "There was this sense of *soul* behind Durotan's eyes. I'm watching this character with these tusks and these hyper-proportionate facial features, and he's utterly inhuman but at the same time so impossibly human: this dad, this husband, sitting in the dark thinking about the world burning down around him."

As with *Avatar* and the recent *Planet Of The Apes* films, the only way to achieve the empathetic impact which so impressed Metzen was to motion-capture actors in orc roles. In addition to Kebbell, Kazinsky, Clancy Brown, Anna Galvin and Daniel Wu donned the grey-unitard mo-cap uniform. But, unlike the twisted, goblinoid beasts of Peter Jackson's Middle-earth, *Warcraft* orcs have a particular look which made the digital transformation that much more of a challenge. "Their heads are the same size as a human's," explains Jones, "but the proportions go gigantic as you get to the neck, the shoulders and the hands. The hands are *huge*. It's almost like a homunculus. It's a weird shape to realise in a way that doesn't look odd."

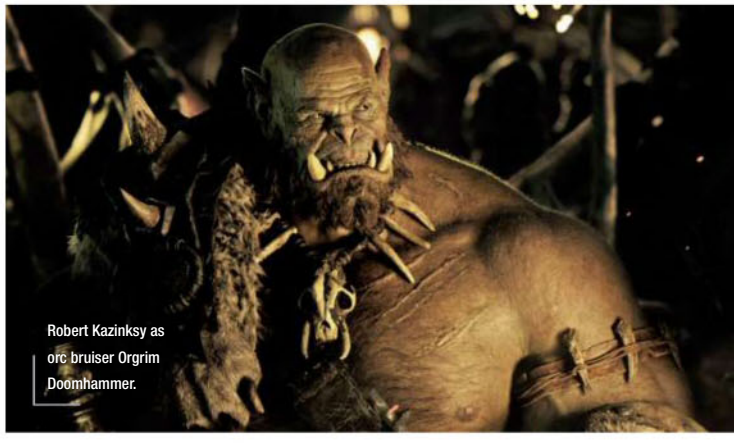
Blizzard artist Wei Wang was on hand to help preserve the true orc-look, while Westenhofer's team at ILM utilised a set-up whereby they could track roughly rendered versions of the bulky, eight-foot orcs moving around on monitors as the slimmer, smaller actors who played them performed on stage. Meanwhile, motion specialist Terry Notary boot-camped the actors to ensure their every mannerism would hold a Draenor-orc's proportions. "With Terry, we sat in the Volume and went over and over how these orcs behave," says Westenhofer. "We wanted something that showed the weight, but wasn't lumbering. And as part of this process, the actors aren't just acting. They are puppeteering themselves — moving as if they have so much more mass."

Kazinsky, who plays Durotan's loyal lieutenant Orgrim, says that "physically it's very demanding", even though he himself is an impressive 6' 1" and weighs more than 200 lb. "There is no generic 'orc walk'," he says. "Durotan has a more upright, panoramic view of the world, while Orgrim is just very straight ahead and more like, 'Let's have a fight.' But we all have that same huge weight to our movement. After 12 hours of walking like an orc, it's exhausting."

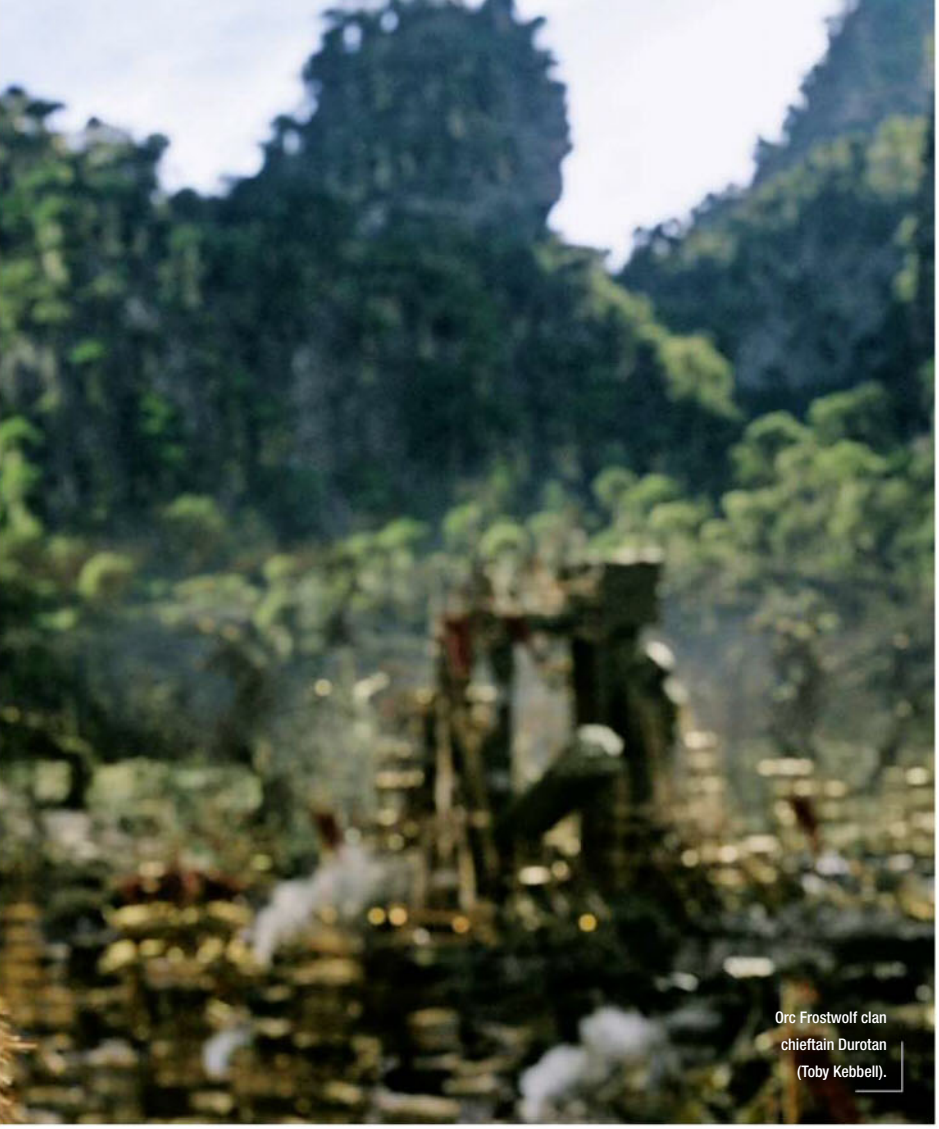
Still, as a 480-day veteran of the game who "banged on doors" to secure a role, he's not complaining. "There's been moments I've stepped onto a set and my mind has just melted," he says. "It's been the most joyous movie I've worked on."



It's a kind of magic: Wizard Khadgar (Ben Schnetzer) with Anduin.



Robert Kazinksy as orc bruiser Orgrim Doomhammer.



Orc Frostwolf clan chieftain Durotan (Toby Kebbell).

WORKING MAGIC

As part-time mage Bill Westenhofer well knows, *World Of Warcraft* is as much about the magic as it is the monsters, whether it's wizards flinging arcane missiles, priests calling down healing, holy light-beams, or warlocks dishing out curses. Two of the principal human characters in the film, Medivh (Ben Foster) and Khadgar (Ben Schnetzer), are powerful wizards from the game's history, so Westenhofer was delighted to find himself discussing with them how the sorcerous VFX would work: "The nerd in me said, 'I am teaching Khadgar and Medivh how to cast spells!'"

He was just as concerned, he says, with making the on-screen effects match the in-game ones, thereby making it feel as real as magic can. "When Khadgar casts a shield spell, you'll see it blast away some of the dust around him. When he blasts something, it actually kicks up debris and knocks a chunk off a wall. That way, you feel a connection to the environment."

However, both he and Jones were concerned not to go overboard with the spellcasting, for fear of blinding the audience with candy-firework effects. Just as the story holds back on the lore and Azeroth's other races and monsters (though we will get to see dwarves, elves, gryphons and worgs), so it keeps the magic in the hands of a select few.

"This is an introduction, so we are keeping it simple at this stage," says Jones. "But if things go well, and people like *Warcraft*, one of the things that we would love to do in a follow-up would be to kind of explode magic, to make it suddenly be everywhere, with everyone having access to it. Show how it really kind of screws the system. But that's for the future."

A future which is entirely in the hands of *Warcraft*'s audience, Jones and his producers point out. "The fans have to tell us [they want more movies]," cautions Roven. "Those that know the game and those that don't." Metzen, though, has been so heartened by the way the cinematic version of his world was built by genuine *WoW*-heads — the warrior-director, producer-paladin, mage-VFX-supervisor, actor-death knight — he allows himself to daydream a long, cinematic future for *Warcraft*.

"I daydream it *all*," he says. "If you're clever you can get 20 movies out of this world." By which point, you imagine, the decade spent getting it spinning will feel like no time at all.

***WARCRAFT* IS OUT ON JUNE 3 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.**



WARCRAFT IN THE WORLD

WILLIAM SHATNER AND CHUCK NORRIS ADVERTISED IT, MILA KUNIS AND VIN DIESEL PLAYED IT, BUT *WORLD OF WARCRAFT*'S TENDRILS HAVE SPREAD FURTHER THAN A FEW FAMOUS ADVOCATES...

SOUTH PARK

Widely regarded as one of the show's best episodes, Season 10's *Make Love, Not Warcraft* saw Cartman, Kyle, Stan and Kenny suffering a full-blown *WoW* addiction. Partly created from game footage (developer Blizzard proved surprisingly amenable), it saw the gang brave scorn, obesity and RSI to take down a super high-level player in-game.

THE BIG BANG THEORY

No surprises that a show about übergeeks should have its own *Warcraft*-themed diversions. Not only do Howard and Bernadette split after she catches him "doing the cybernasty" with Lucinda the troll, but Sheldon's level 85 blood elf gets hacked and the thief makes off with his gold armour and Wand Of Untainted Power.

LEEROY JENKINS

Of the countless *Warcraft* memes, Leeroy Jenkins (Google it) is by far the most famous. Revolving around said character's kamikaze tendencies, the viral video gave birth to his signature battle cry ("Leeeeroy Jenkinssss"), variants of which are shouted in both an episode of *How I Met Your Mother* and Jason Lee comedy *My Name Is Earl*.

ZEALOUS1: *LEVEL UP*

American rapper ZeaLouS1 (the self-styled 'Sleeping Dragon of Nerdcore') released the track *Level Up* in 2009. Not only did the video feature a dancing Tauren but it boasted such lyrical genius as: "*I level up my Druid when I'm playing* World Of Warcraft/ *Stompin' anybody close to my warpath/ It got serious, I'm passin' up booty/ So I can finish the quest 'cause that is my duty*." Word.

THE GUILD

Geek queen Felicia Day (known on screen primarily for *Supernatural*) hit the spotlight with web sitcom *The Guild*, based around a group of *WoW* players and their demented antics both in-game and 'IRL'. *Warcraft* is never directly named for legal reasons but the show is as knowing and affectionate a look at *WoW* gamer culture as you'll find.

JAMES DYER



BRIGHT STARLING

If you think *The Silence Of The Lambs'* 25-year success is down to a certain Dr. Lecter, think again: as **Jodie Foster** tells us, it's all about Clarice

WORDS **TERRI WHITE** PHOTOGRAPHY **SARAH DUNN**





INDIANA JONES, JAMES BOND, Will Kane. As you count down the top ten of the American Film Institute's 100 Greatest Heroes, all is as you'd imagine it would be. But there, sitting quietly at number six, is a rather different character, a very different hero. Not a chest-beating, gun-toting, whip-wielding protagonist, but a softly spoken intellectual who is slight of frame.

Twenty-five years on from the release of *The Silence Of The Lambs*, Hannibal Lecter has become a bona fide money-spinning franchise in his own right. Books, films and TV shows have grown up and flourished around the Chianti-sipping serial killer, his "*fff fff fff*" now more recognisable to the ear than most classic one-liners. And while Anthony Hopkins undoubtedly gave one of the performances of his career in *Lambs*, the heart of the film belonged — and still belongs — to the woman at number six: Clarice Starling.

That character was almost something different entirely. Early proofs of Thomas Harris' book ended up in the hands of recent Oscar-winner Jodie Foster and, separately, screenwriter Ted Tally. Even though it had bounced around Hollywood with multiple writers declaring it "unadaptable", both immediately knew they wanted to secure the rights. "Everyone was so distracted by the grimness of the subject matter that they couldn't see what was right in front of them," Tally tells *Empire*. "They couldn't see the wonderful character story."

Both were beaten to it by Gene Hackman, who planned to not only write the screenplay, but also produce, direct and star in the film. When he changed his mind on all counts, Orion Pictures picked it up and Tally found himself with the gig he had wanted all along. Jonathan Demme then signed on to direct, with a very specific and rather unexpected Clarice in mind: Michelle Pfeiffer. Foster, however, wasn't ready to give up without a fight.

"It's somewhat of an unconscious thing when you're attracted to something," she remembers. "You can't stop thinking about it. You understand how her lips would move, what she'd be wearing."

Her preoccupation with the character wasn't a fleeting one and Foster took the bold step of flying to New York to convince Demme that she, in fact, should play Clarice. "I said, 'I know you have somebody else in mind and I love her and think she's fantastic and a great actress, but I'd like to be your second choice.'"

Foster moved to pole position when, apparently put off by the darkness of the story, Pfeiffer walked away from the role. But there had been one person who'd been pulling for Foster all along, from when he first "charged through" Harris' manuscript, right through writing the first draft.

"Intelligence," says Tally when asked what he saw of Clarice in Jodie (and vice versa). "There are actors who are wonderfully sexy and charming and funny, and they're not as smart as the character they're playing. I knew that Jodie was very smart. And I knew that she could project both the vulnerability and the toughness. The things she had been through in her own life would make her sympathetic to the character and make her a champion of women being victimised."

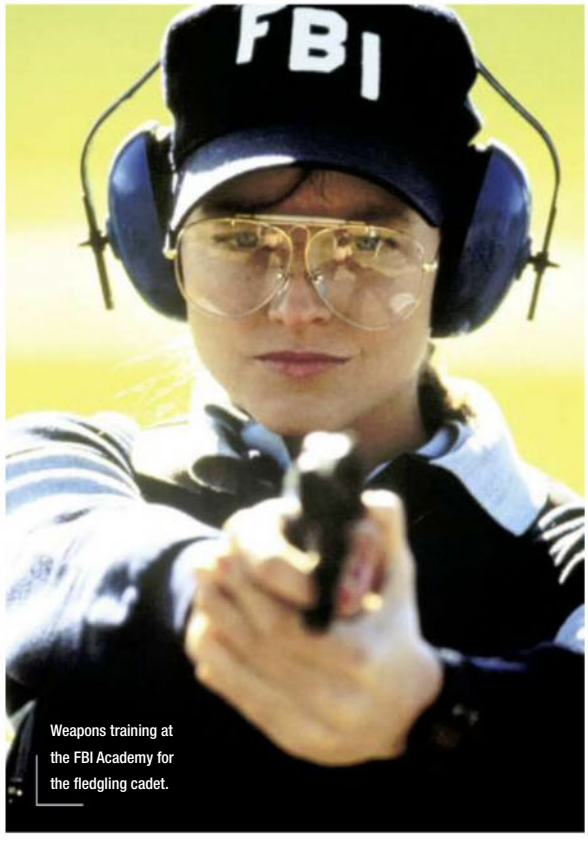
Winning over Demme may have been tougher, but it wasn't just circumstance that secured her casting. Foster took, from the book, the belief that this was not only a whole new female protagonist but also a whole new narrative, particularly for this genre. She spoke to him about myth and, specifically, the mythology that sees a young prince being despatched to slay the dragon but who returns when his people need saving.

"When he comes back, he's figured it out," she says. "He meets himself along the way and works out his character flaws. He's changed and heals his people but he's no longer one of them. That's such a great traditional myth, but it's just not one that's reserved for women. It has always been a man's coming of age."

Foster's take on Clarice elevated not just the character but also the film

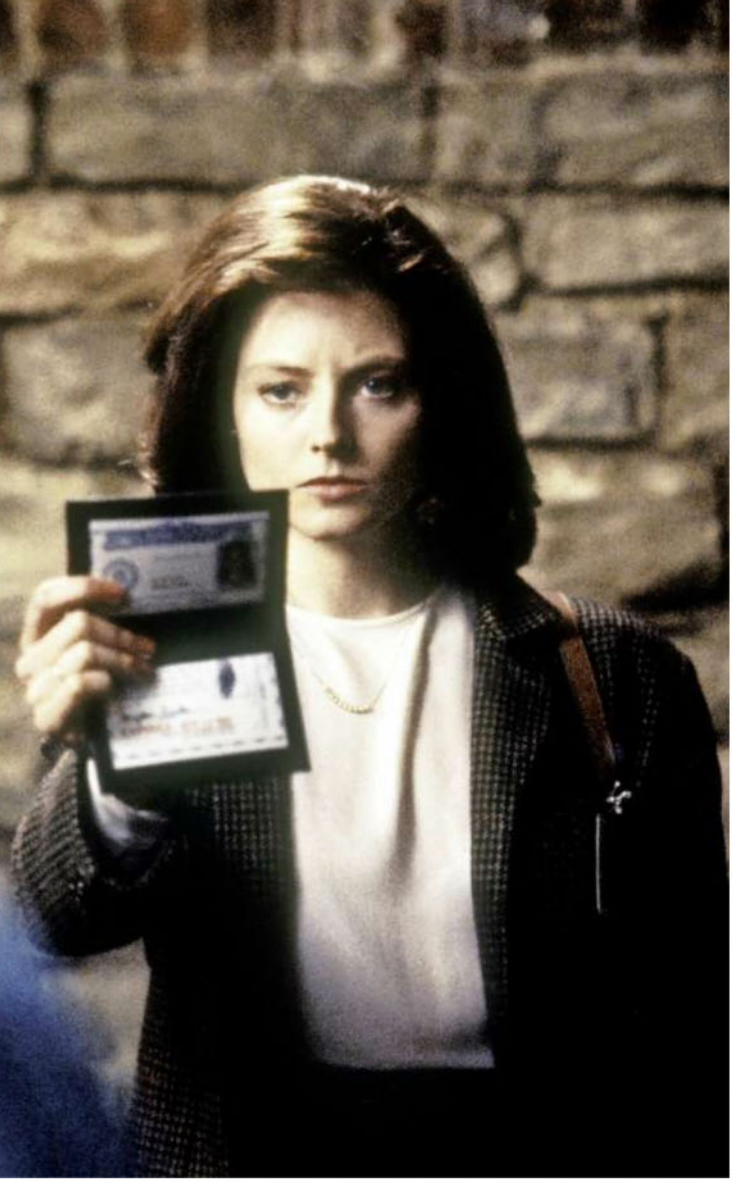


A meeting of minds: Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) introduces herself to the incarcerated Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins).



Weapons training at the FBI Academy for the fledgling cadet.







It's a man's world: Jodie Foster perfectly pitches her character as both vulnerable and tough.



Foster on location with director Jonathan Demme.

as a whole. This isn't simply a 'cop hunts a serial killer while more women suffer' slasher story. This is the story of a young woman trying to save other young women and becoming a hero in the process.

For this shift in the narrative, it was imperative the story be told almost exclusively from Clarice's point of view, which is where Demme's signature styles of shooting — both point of view and intense down-the-lens close-ups — became crucial. But not before Tally got to work on the screenplay, presenting it, bar Lecter's escape and Catherine Martin's abduction, entirely from Clarice's perspective. This was a significant shift from the book.

"This was the most important decision I had to make in the adaptation," Tally says. "Everything sprang from that. The book had multiple points of view and went inside Lecter's head, (*FBI agent-in-charge Jack*) Crawford's head, Jame Gumb's head. I thought, 'it's her story and I want the audience to, if possible, not know more than she knows. To find out things as she discovers them herself.' She's their representative, she's taking them on this journey with her."

In that sense, Foster and Starling *were* the audience. She was the guiding morality, the face of normality and decency in direct contrast with so much darkness and brutality, and particularly in contrast with Lecter. This, to Foster, is the key to Clarice's position at the centre of the film.

"Hannibal is damaged. And he is monstrous and he's abusive. He's lashing out and to him that's delicious — he feeds upon that hurt, because that's the way he knows how to connect with power. That character cannot be your main character. You need to understand him or come to him through someone whose feet are grounded and is grappling with human problems."

That relationship with Lecter however, is not merely one of good versus evil, of right versus wrong. She sees him as not simply a monster but recognises, and to some extent respects, his intelligence as well. Crucially, he is the only man in the film to treat Clarice as an equal, to not patronise, condescend or make judgements upon her based on gender. The audience immediately understand the position she occupies in her world when, getting into the elevator at Quantico in one of the establishing early scenes, a circle of men tower over her as she stands firmly in the centre.

Much of the dynamic and tension with Lecter was based on the real relationship between Foster and Anthony Hopkins, who didn't have a chance to get to know one another before shooting began, so — apart from a table read in Orion's New York headquarters — their first interaction was shooting either side of the glass. "We weren't really comfortable with each other," shares Foster. "Somewhere towards the end, I was having a tuna fish sandwich and he was sitting across from me. It was sort of like the first



Starling has her eye on the prize after gunning down serial killer Buffalo Bill aka Jame Gumb (Ted Levine).



Alone and on the trail of Buffalo Bill and his victim Catherine Martin (Brooke Smith), who is trapped in the basement of the serial killer's house.

"Starling mirrored how I saw myself and what I wanted to do with my work." Jodie Foster

time that we had talked. I put my arms around him and he put his arms around me and he said, 'I was scared of you,' and I said, 'I was scared of you!'"

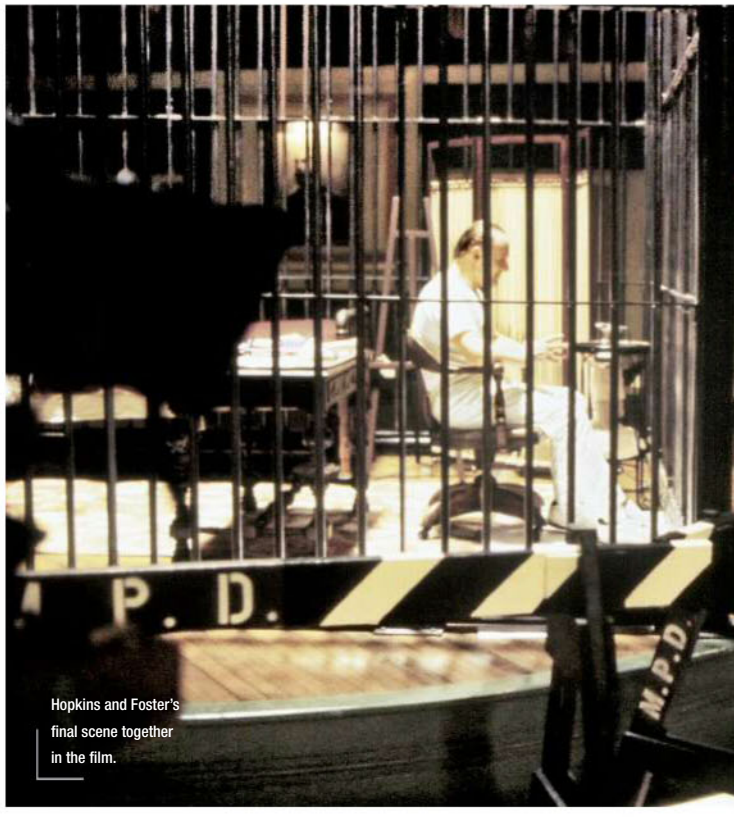
Though both gave Oscar-winning performances, Tally is certain of whose movie it ultimately was: "When people kept wanting to talk about Hannibal, I said, 'He's the sizzle, but she's the steak'. She's what it's all about. He's a supporting character, in effect."

Though undoubtedly the central protagonist, Clarice isn't merely a hero without complication. She is vulnerable, intelligent and strong, but also fiercely and unashamedly ambitious, a rare quality in a female character that audiences are meant to root for. During her very first visit to Lecter, Clarice is quick to use her femininity to manipulate Dr. Frederick Chilton (Anthony Heald) into allowing her to see Lecter alone, responding coyly with, "I would have missed the pleasure of your company, sir," when he questions why she didn't make her request earlier, when they were in his office.

Similarly, it's been suggested that Clarice is simply bait for Lecter and spends the movie being manipulated by him, but Foster sees this as very much a conscious decision on her part. "This is a character that's restrained and reserved and calculated," she says. "She's wilfully being used by him — she's so ambitious that she's willing to let it happen."

This ambition is ultimately what leads Clarice to Buffalo Bill: not using physical strength and brute force but by reading the killer through the eyes of his victims, through empathy. Foster and Tally see this as being due in large part to Clarice's own history ("Well, Clarice — have the lambs stopped screaming?"), but crucially, though traumatic, hers is not filled with the conventional forms of trauma most female characters were handed by writers.

"Her past is not about being raped or having her father abuse her or any number of tropes that have always been female motivations on film," asserts Foster. "You keep waiting for that terrible awful memory — you know, 'that's why Clarice is so singular because she actually is a victim'. When, in fact,



Hopkins and Foster's final scene together in the film.





QUICK TURNS

ANTHONY HOPKINS MAY HAVE A MERE 18 MINUTES AND 20 SECONDS OF SCREEN TIME FOR HIS BEST ACTOR-WINNING PERFORMANCE AS LECTER. BUT HE DOESN'T HOLD THE RECORD FOR THE SHORTEST. HERE ARE HIS RIVALS:



SHORTEST BEST ACTRESS

Patricia Neal, *Hud* (1963)
SCREEN TIME: 21:51
Neal played the housekeeper for the dysfunctional family on the Bannon ranch, in Martin Ritt's modern-day Western. A very tough part to cast, said Ritt. "It called for a special combination of warmth and toughness. Pat Neal was it."



SHORTEST BEST ACTOR

David Niven, *Separate Tables* (1958)
SCREEN TIME: 15:38
Niven's only Oscar was for playing Major Pollock in this adaptation of Terence Rattigan's play. The Major is the subject of a scandal that rocks the residential hotel in which he's staying. Much talked-about by other characters, his actual appearances on screen essentially bookend the film.



SHORTEST BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Ben Johnson, *The Last Picture Show* (1971)
SCREEN TIME: 08:46
Taciturn Western actor Johnson hadn't even wanted to play the irascible bar owner Sam, fearing the part was too wordy. Director Peter Bogdanovich promised him an Oscar if he changed his mind. He was right. Johnson's moving monologue at the lake is arguably the heart of the film.



SHORTEST BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Beatrice Straight, *Network* (1976)
SCREEN TIME: 05:02
Straight's winning five minutes is a single devastating scene in which William Holden tells her he's leaving her for Faye Dunaway. Between kitchen table and living room Straight runs the gamut from stillness to anger to inconsolable grief to steely resolve, and even compassion.

OWEN WILLIAMS

it's something simple, that everyone can relate to. It's that love for her father. It's delicate, and their relationship was delicate, and the importance and significance of it is delicate."

Coming off the back of her role as rape victim Sarah Tobias in *The Accused*, Foster was determined to play an entirely different type of character and, more importantly, an entirely different type of woman. Many people around her thought this was the wrong direction after picking up a gold statue. They were surprised she wasn't, as she puts it, plumping for a more "flashy, flamboyant character". For Foster, though, she craved this shift away from victimhood.

"There really was a pattern where I just kept playing women who were victims," she says. "There was something about this shift to a woman that could identify with victims but was destined to be the person who saves them because she knows them so well. In a weird way it mirrored how I saw myself and what I wanted to do with my work."

Foster's gamble (if it could ever really be considered such a thing) paid off and Clarice was something genuinely revolutionary in film at the time — the late '80s, the start of the '90s — and Foster, Tally and Demme all knew they'd created something and someone that had never been seen on screen before. Which made it all the more surprising when Foster didn't reprise the role for the sequel.

She cites the sheer amount of time it took Harris to write the next book as the reason, something she says surprised them all (*Hannibal* wasn't published until 1999). "I think we all thought we'd be joining together again," she laments. "We didn't realise at the time that that would be it."

Yet there is surely solace in the knowledge that the impact of this character, as portrayed in *The Silence Of The Lambs*, has in no way lessened and is still felt through other films, and through female characters as a whole. Foster tells *Empire* a story about taking her kids — now old enough — to see *The Silence Of The Lambs* at a movie theatre in Los Angeles and her joy that they wanted to talk about it afterwards. It had stood the test of time. Clarice had stood the test of time. She still resonated.

Suddenly number six feels like it doesn't do her justice.



WHAM! BAM! THANK YOU MAN

Meet Axel Braun: the modern master of the porn parody. With the game-changing likes of *Batman v Superman XXX* and *Star Wars XXX*, he's taking the sex-film to a whole new level

WORDS **SIMON BRAUND** PORTRAITS **STEVE SCHOFIELD**



TO DESCRIBE AXEL BRAUN as prolific would be a grave understatement. Over the last two-and-a-half decades, he has produced, written and directed more than 500 pornographic movies, immortalising on video every carnal activity you can imagine, and probably a great many you can't. He is most famous, however, for the hardcore parodies of sci-fi, comic-book and superhero movies that he has been producing under the Axel Braun Productions banner since 2002.

Porn parodies are hardly new. Yet there's a big difference between Axel's movies and the likes of *Big Trouble In Little Vagina*, *Charlie's Anals* and *In Diana Jones And The Temple Of Poon*. Where these were simply regular porn movies which capitalised on their (sometimes brilliantly) pun-tastic titles, Braun's parodies are relatively big-budget affairs, boasting elaborate sets and costumes, decent acting, proper plots and convincing special effects. They're still porn — let's make no bones about that — but they exhibit a level of quality that has seldom, if ever, been associated with dirty movies before. 2012's *Star Wars XXX: A Porn Parody*, for instance, is a hilarious, scene-for-scene send-up of *Episode IV* complete with lightsaber duels, deep-space dogfights and a thrilling Death Star attack as a finale. There's tons of sex, too, of course (Han definitely shoots first in this one), but delete that — as Braun thoughtfully does by including a shag-free version among the DVD extras — and it plays like a grade-A fan film.

Describing himself as "a *huge* movie fan", Braun claims he will never parody a movie he doesn't rate and nor will he treat those he does with anything less than due reverence. "Each one is a labour of love," he says, in his chirpy Italian accent. "People say, 'You should do *Twilight*, you'd make a fortune.' It doesn't matter. I'm not a fan; I just can't do it."

A stickler for authenticity, he once flew to Argentina to approve fabric for a Batman costume that was unavailable in the US. Budgets for his movies — XXX versions of *Avatar*, *Spider-Man*, *The Dark Knight* and *The Avengers*, to name a few — often exceed $100,000, three or four times the average for a high-end porn feature. *Star Wars XXX* cost an unprecedented $500,000, much of it spent on costumes and CG effects. It is also the biggest-selling porn DVD ever — although neither Braun nor distributors Vivid Entertainment will divulge how much it has made.

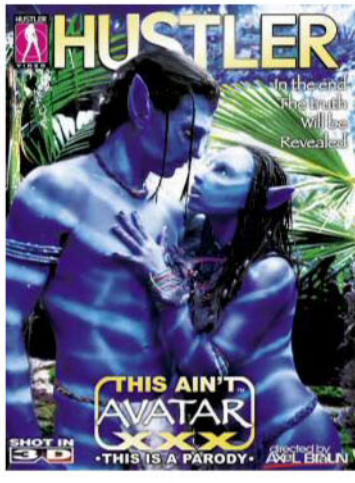
"Porn for masturbation is a dime a dozen," says Braun. "I go after fans of the source material. Any *Star Wars* fanatic will have the *Star Wars* mug, the *Star Wars* bedspread. Now there's *Star Wars* porn?! They have to have it. I sell porn to people who don't buy porn."

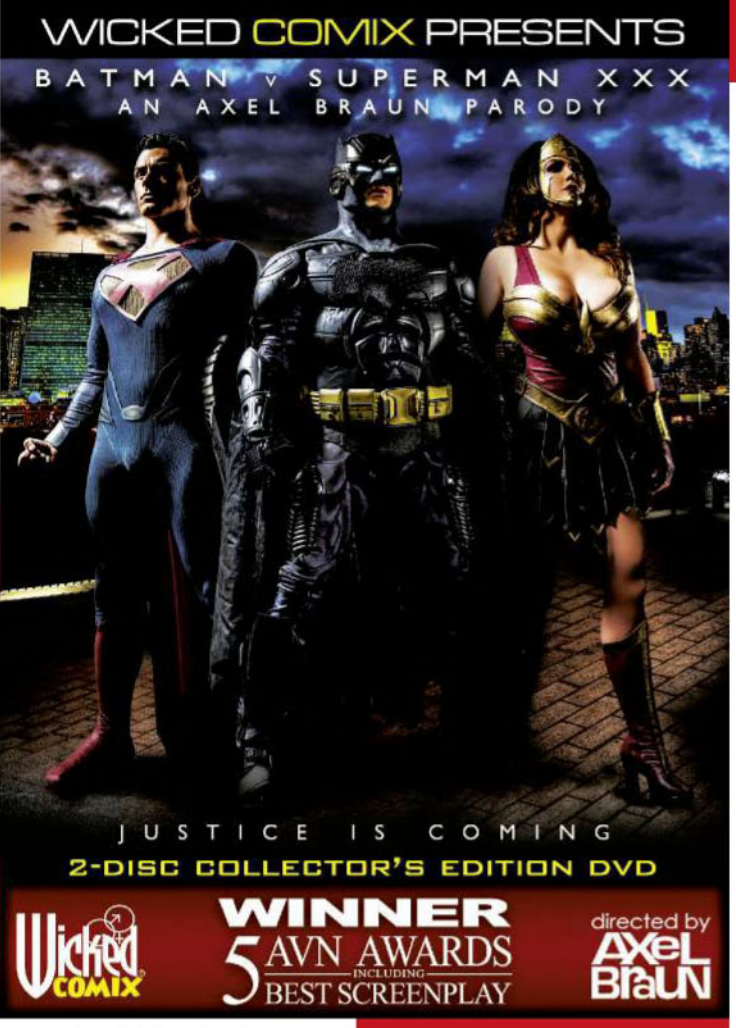
















Above and left: A selection of Braun's many successful parody porn films.

Which is not to say people who don't *consume* porn. There's a limitless supply of it on the internet for free, a fact that has radically affected the DVD market (NBC News reported a 50 per cent sales drop in 2009). Braun claims a 'regular' porn DVD (i.e. all sex, no plot, shot in a day) costing $10,000 to $12,000 to produce now sells around 300 copies in the US. Hardly worth the effort, you'd think, but it's a figure backed up by Alec Helmy, president and publisher of adult industry trade magazine *XBIZ*. "Major titles sell around a thousand," he says, "so 300 for a regular title seems accurate." By contrast, *Star Wars XXX*, says Braun, has sold almost 700,000 copies on DVD and Blu-ray. And according to the *New York Daily News*, sales sky-rocketed 500 per cent in the two weeks before *The Force Awakens* opened.

Bouncing around the communal area of his production facility in Chatsworth, California, Braun is a vibrant, even impish presence. On the cusp of 50, he looks 20 years younger, dressed in sweatshirt, jeans and Chuck Taylors. He has a childlike, almost nerdy enthusiasm, talking fast and laughing often. Giving *Empire* the grand tour, he pauses in front of a framed poster for *Barbarella XXX*. "The first movie I ever jerked off to," he beams, almost certainly referring to the Jane Fonda original. The walls of his barn-like studio are hung with a gaudy selection of thrift-store art, the ceiling a hanging garden of chandeliers, Chinese lanterns and Moroccan lampshades, but in production terms it's in a state of undress today, with no scenes scheduled, save for a blow job later this evening.

Back in the reception area, however, four of Braun's contract stars have arrived for a costume fitting, and the director fusses over them, like a porn-king mother hen. "He's such a perfectionist," sighs Carter Cruise, titular star of the upcoming *Supergirl XXX*. "We were shooting a scene once and he made us do the whole thing over because he saw a wrinkle in the rug. He cares more about production [values] and story than he does about the sex."

Tori Black, who plays Catwoman in Braun's *Batman* parodies, agrees. "He'll stop the set for two hours if we have a hair out of place. He's definitely the best director in the industry. But it's hard to keep your hair in place when you're fucking."

Born and raised in Italy,

pornography was in Axel Braun's blood, though he didn't know it until he was 17 years old. That was when Lasse Braun appeared in his life, and revealed he was in fact Axel's biological father. Braun Sr. was an industry legend, a director, producer, screenwriter and novelist, whose passionate advocacy played a large part in the legalisation of pornography in Europe. Briefly estranged from her husband (the man Axel called 'Dad'), Axel's mother had had an affair with Braun, unaware of the business he was in, and Axel was the result.

During the early '60s, as the son of the Italian consul to Germany, Braun Sr. enjoyed diplomatic immunity which, being an enterprising sort, he used to smuggle illegal porn magazines across international borders. It was a lucrative business. "He began to wonder if there was also a market for films," says Braun. "So he took out an ad in an Italian newspaper: 'Adult movies from Sweden. For catalogue send — whatever it was in 1961 — to this address.' He got a PO box in Stockholm and waited to see what happened."

A month later, Lasse called to check on the response. He was told, angrily, he had three shopping carts full of mail and if he didn't collect it immediately, it'd be incinerated. "There was no catalogue and no films," laughs Braun. "He took the money and made his first movie, a parody of *Madame Butterfly*, just him and his girlfriend."

Realising there was a huge, untapped market for adult entertainment, Braun Sr. began making films in earnest, using his diplomatic immunity to distribute them and operating under a variety of aliases to evade the authorities. He eventually settled in the Netherlands, turning an old meat factory into a studio. Employing costumes, sets and exotic locations, his movies were among the first to break into the mainstream: *French Blue* (1974) ran for six months at the City 2 cinema in Amsterdam, while *Sensations* (1975) and *Body Love* (1977) were shown at the Cannes Film Festival. Several of them were parodies of James Bond and *The Vikings*. The first European director inducted into the Adult Video News Hall Of Fame, Braun died in February 2015 at the age of 78, and his extraordinary life is documented in the 2003 film *I Was The King Of Porn*.

Initially Axel Braun, who studied film in Italy and America, was reluctant to follow his recently discovered father into the family business. "He asked me if I wanted to shoot background footage on a film he was producing," he says. "I was 22, I wanted to be a legitimate filmmaker, I didn't really want to do porn. But he said, 'It's five days' work and pays five grand.' Okay!"

The die was cast when Braun captured a particular angle on an anal scene that escaped the three official cameramen. "It wasn't the opening of *Touch Of Evil*," he laughs. But Lasse was delighted and immediately employed him as his permanent videographer. "I learnt every aspect of the business from him," says Braun. "I saw an opportunity and I took it." Relocating to Los Angeles in 1990, Braun wrote screenplays, produced, edited and ghost-directed for



Axel Braun with his leading ladies: (l-r) Riley Steele, Aiden Ashley, Asa Akira and Carter Cruise.

his father until 1998, when he was offered his own director-producer deal by VBCA Pictures. Then, 30 years after that fateful anal angle, and with over 300 movies under his belt, opportunity knocked again.

According to Alec Helmy

the current porn parody boom was kicked off by the 2007 success of producer-director Will Ryder's *Brady Bunch* pastiche *Not The Bradys XXX*. In 2009, keen to capitalise on the phenomenon, Hustler, for whom Braun had already made a number of movies, approached him to direct a parody for them. He agreed, on the condition it was *Happy Days*. "I grew up watching the show," he says. "I thought it would make a great parody because it was all about guys trying to get laid."

This Ain't Happy Days XXX won eight Adult Video News awards, including Best Director and Best Screenplay. *Hustler* begged Braun for a follow-up on the strength of pre-orders alone. "I said, 'Okay, *Star Trek*.' And from then on there was no going back." When Hustler rejected his proposal for a parody of the Adam West *Batman* TV show, he decided to make it himself.

2010's *Batman XXX* captured the high-camp, swinging '60s appeal of the original perfectly. A huge hit, it was also key to establishing the Axel Braun formula. Like all his parodies, it's mischievously tongue-in-cheek — very funny, in fact — but deadly serious when it comes to authenticity. It doesn't just mimic the costumes and sets of the TV show, the dialogue is also spot-on ("That single statement indicates to me the first oncoming thrusts of manhood, old chum," says Batman to Robin at one point). It gets the recurring gags right, including the famous horizontal wall-climbing scenes, and the detail is astonishing. For instance, Randy Spears, who plays The Joker, sports a moustache under his whiteface make-up, just like Cesar Romero on the show. He grew it specifically for the role. The emphasis is firmly on parody, but — and this is important to Braun — there's no hint of mockery. It knows what made its source material tick and reveals great affection for it.

"When I was eight years old, my dad brought me a View-Master from America," Braun recalls, a little misty-eyed. "Super-sharp 3D, amazing! It was a *Batman* episode, *The Purr-fect Crime* with Julie Newmar as Catwoman. I loved it! So when I came to recreate it, it had to be perfect." He looks up at his floor-to-ceiling shelves of awards. "I still have it at home!" he says. "I should bring it here! All of this came from that View-Master."

Braun does not have the field of porn parodies all to himself. Will Ryder is still



a perfect match for his extraordinary creative and marketing skills." Braun contends that the movies pick themselves according to his personal likes and dislikes. "It's easy for me to make these movies successful," he says, "because I am their demographic. I'm their biggest fan."

He has some competition there, and not just among the completist Comic-Con crowd. It's not that uncommon, he claims, to receive positive feedback from the producers, directors and stars of the original movies. "I can't mention names," he says, "but people call me all the time and say, 'I just want you to know, that was awesome!' Andrew Garfield admitted on TV that he watched *Spider-Man XXX* for inspiration!"

He did once receive death threats over *Elvis XXX: A Porn Parody* but, on the whole, fans dig it: online consensus is that *Star Wars XXX* has more affinity with the *Star Wars* spirit than any of George Lucas' prequels. He also has a team of lawyers on call to ensure he is in watertight compliance with relevant copyright law and also points out that, whereas a lengthy court battle with, say, Lucasfilm would be terrific publicity for him, it might not have quite the same benefits for them.

It's an apposite example given Axel's next dream project: a parody of *The Empire Strikes Back*, a lavish venture he is attempting to finance via crowdfunding. It's not that he needs the money — he's hardly fallen on hard times — rather, he says, "I want to know if people want to see this movie. If they do, I'll make it. I don't care about profit; I just need 500,000 people to give me a dollar each."

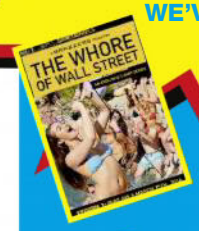
Given the trailer for *Star Wars XXX* received almost five million YouTube hits in the last three months alone, he may get a lot more than that. "Well, if I get five million," he laughs, "I make a five-million-dollar porn film." Brace yourselves. The Force could be in for another, very rude, awakening.

"I go after fans of the source material. I sell porn to people who don't buy porn." **Axel Braun**

a prolific producer and, thanks to titles like *Not The Wizard Of Oz XXX*, *Not Animal House XXX*, *Grease XXX* and *Not The Three Stooges XXX*, has an audience and a clutch of awards of his own. "Axel and Will are the biggest names by far," says Helmy, "but in the last few years Axel has clearly dominated." He attributes that to more than just the big budgets. "Axel Braun is to porn parodies what Axl Rose is to heavy rock," he says. "What drives his success is outstanding talent and a flamboyant persona. Plus he has an uncanny knack for picking the right movies to parody, ones that are

PORN TEST

CAN YOU TELL THE GENUINE PARODIES FROM THE ONES WE'VE MADE UP?





1. Game Of Bones

REAL? | FAKE?

2. Night Of The Giving Head

REAL? | FAKE?

3. The Well-Hunger Games: Cock In Jay's Parts 1

REAL? | FAKE?

4. Lord Of The G-Strings: The Femaleship Of The String

REAL? | FAKE?

5. The Breast Erotic Marigold Hot Hell

REAL? | FAKE?

6. The Whore Of Wall Street

REAL? | FAKE?

7. Into Stella

REAL? | FAKE?

8. Sperminator Genityls

REAL? | FAKE?

9. Down On Abbey

REAL? | FAKE?

10. Play-Mate Of The Apes

REAL? | FAKE?

Answers 1. REAL, 2. REAL, 3. FAKE, 4. REAL, 5. FAKE, 6. REAL, 7. FAKE, 8. FAKE, 9. REAL, 10. REAL



• TRUNK ARCHIVE



the GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Superhero blockbuster, indie drama or balls-out comedy, Rose Byrne can handle them all. And she'll bust a few clichés along the way for good measure

WORDS **JIMI FAMUREWA** PORTRAITS **DAVID SLIJPER**



Reuniting with screen spouse Seth Rogen in *Bad Neighbours 2*.

She may depict one of the *X-Men* universe's few non-mutant characters but, in real life, Rose Byrne is adept at shape-shifting. Here is an actress who has effortlessly sold everything from a flinty lawyer navigating the cool, cruel world of corporate attorneys (*Damages*) to an aggressively backcombed comedy villainess (*Spy*). And now, perhaps most impressive of all, on a brisk New York morning, she is doing a pretty convincing impersonation of a new parent who has had a decent night's sleep.

The 36 year-old Australian recently gave birth to her first child, a boy called Rocco, and she is still adjusting to her new normal. "He's two months old so the sleep's not great," says Byrne brightly, in a sing-song Sydney accent that has audibly withstood nearly a decade of life in Manhattan. "It's still early days so there's a lot of coffee but I haven't *quite* hit the Red Bull yet," she laughs.

Byrne is here to talk to *Empire* about two imminent movies. There is of course *X-Men: Apocalypse*, featuring her return to the mutant franchise's sprawling cast list as Moira MacTaggert, the CIA agent last seen succumbing to Michael Fassbender's magnetism in *X-Men: First Class*.

But before that it's bros and keg-rolling debauchery in *Bad Neighbours 2*, an amped-up sequel which pits Byrne and Seth Rogen's young, suburban parents against a new, all-girl cabal of hard-partying college kids who are jeopardising their house sale. Among the many pleasures of that gently subversive first film (malfunctioning airbag booby traps, enjoyably bad Robert De Niro impressions), one of the most potent was Byrne's deft, scene-stealing portrayal of Kelly, a woman in a bromantic comedy who (hold on to your togas here, guys) actually gets to do more than scold or buzzkill her way through the fun.

It was a role that showcased Byrne's adaptability and also cemented her newfound status as one of Hollywood's most reliable comedy performers. Having broken through in 1930s-set drama *I Capture The Castle*, Byrne went on to pop up in grown-up sci-fi (*Sunshine*) and a mythical epic (*Troy*) before a gleefully deranged turn as Russell Brand's trainwreck girlfriend in *Get Him To The Greek* unlocked her true calling. The hits duly followed, ranging from her ugly-crying ice queen in *Bridesmaids* to that arms dealer in *Spy*. Whether the immaculately turned-out alpha with the filthy mind, or the straight woman who scores her own laughs, she's become every comedy director's most devastating secret weapon.

Your role in *Bad Neighbours* didn't resemble many of the sidelined female characters we occasionally see in these big, male-skewed comedies. Was that something you had a direct hand in?

Well, I'm lucky because Nick (*Stoller, the director*) was championing that from the

FOOTNOTES

1 Paparazzi long lenses were a regular feature on the first film, but Byrne notes that moving to Georgia for the sequel helped calm things down. To a degree. "It just comes with the territory with Zac (*Efron*) though," says Byrne. "He's so used to it, but the tailgating scene we shot was a crazy day for paparazzi."



As Rose in calling card *I Capture The Castle* (2003).



With the cream of the comedy crop in *Bridesmaids* (2011).



Gunning for Jude Law in last year's *Spy*.

FOOTNOTES

❷ Byrne lived in Hackney with her sister and still owns a place in East London, although she remembers constantly thinking she was "just not quite cool enough to be living there".

❸ She played Carly Whitely for three episodes of the '90s teen series and still rates it as one of the better shows to come from her homeland. "It dealt with pregnancy, drugs, things like that. It was a smart show."

get-go. We were really on the same page. The first film script had a few different incarnations, and my first note was always, "I'm not interested in playing the nagging wife," and that's what Nick wanted to do as well. So it was great, and a really fun collaboration. And it was also something that people hadn't seen before — they commented that it felt fresh, so we felt good about it.

Plus, this time your character and Seth's character are coming up against a sorority, which somewhat subverts the college-film formula again. Was that always the idea for a sequel?

Yes, in all the incarnations I was aware of that was always the idea. The film was very much a contained thing initially and whenever we mentioned a sequel on the first one it was always as a joke. But even though there were a few versions of the script — there always are with these types of comedies — the core was always that there was a sorority.

You were pregnant during filming in Atlanta ❶ and, in the sequel, your character Kelly is pregnant too. Did you feel the film should delve deeper into what it means to be a young, once-cool parent?

Well, I think we really wanted to keep that authentic quality that the first one had. The mundane things and the ridiculous things. It was really important to keep that theme running through it. Basically, all the time Kelly and Mac (*Rogen*) are dealing with this idea of wondering if they're bad parents. That was what they were faced with this time. Kelly, as you say, is expecting in the sequel so they keep asking, "Should we actually be doing this? Are we irresponsible?" All that kind of stuff.

You've also pretty much been a working actor since you were 13, and you briefly lived in London at the age of 25 ❷. Did you manage to have any sorority-style, hard-partying fun in those years?

(*Laughs*) Yeah, not quite. In Australia we don't have fraternities and sororities, it's such a uniquely American thing. But for sure, I definitely did my fair share of partying. Probably when I was a little bit younger, maybe 16 or 17 in Australia, going to rave parties and stuff like that.

Speaking of Australia, you never appeared in *Home And Away* or *Neighbours*, which is rare for a successful Aussie actor. Did you ever come close?

I was on a soap for a very brief period, it was a very short-lived one. I was on it for six months and it was called *Echo Point*. No-one really saw it, it got cancelled and it never made it to the UK, I don't think. I auditioned for *Home and Away* a bunch of times but I never got on. I never auditioned for *Neighbours*, maybe because it was in Melbourne, I don't know. I was on *Heartbreak High* ❸ though. Those shows were such a rite of passage but for some reason I ended up doing this other one. Other Aussie actors that were on those shows have never really razzed me about it. They razz me about other things, but not that.

You've effectively reinvented yourself as a comedic actor in the past few years. Was that something that

came organically or did you have to push for it? Did you gamble by turning down a few tempting but super-serious roles?
Yeah, it was a bit of both. I'd been dying to do comedy so I was really stoked to get into *Get Him To The Greek* because that was an incredible opportunity. Auditioning for that was really a big deal. For sure, though, there's that thing of knowing what to turn down. After *Bridesmaids* I got offered a lot of uptight female characters in comedy. You just have to navigate it and try to make sure you're not repeating yourself.

Many of your frequent collaborators, such as Melissa McCarthy and Seth Rogen, have a background in improv comedy and even stand-up. Were you ever tempted to train up in that world?
No, I've never done an improv comedy class and obviously I haven't done any stand-up, which I genuinely think is one of the hardest and most daunting things you can do. The improvisation has definitely been something I've learnt on the job and that really started with *Get Him To The Greek*, where the philosophy was just "say whatever you want". Russell was incredibly patient with me as I learnt the ropes on that one. The character was pretty fun because she was so freewheeling and loose, so that helped. I did a bunch of research and just watched endless video clips and interviews with pop stars [4].

What are some of the improvised comedy scenes you've worked on that have been hardest to nail?
Definitely the toast scene in *Bridesmaids*. We did a lot of versions of that. We did the scripted version then we would improv. It was a big set-piece and we did that the whole night.

You've also starred in smaller projects like *I Capture The Castle*, which gave you your break, and the *Insidious* films. Do you crave a return to that kind of work?
It's lovely to have diversity in any career, whether it's something like *Bad Neighbours* or something small like *The Meddler* [5]. If I could keep juggling things like that I'd feel very happy. We had a great time on *Insidious*. We shot that first one in 22 days. James Wan, the director, is so terrific and such a hard worker. Me and Patrick (*Wilson, her co-star*) hit it off and it was just this dirty little horror movie that James took complete control of, having had a few bad experiences with studios. It was a cool, little script and it was fun. It felt like guerrilla filmmaking. No money, no trailers, nothing. Just us in a scary house.

Proof that it's not all about plentiful catering options.
(*Laughs*) Yeah, exactly. You can cope.

"I'm so lucky on *X-Men* because I don't have to dress up. I'm just mortal."

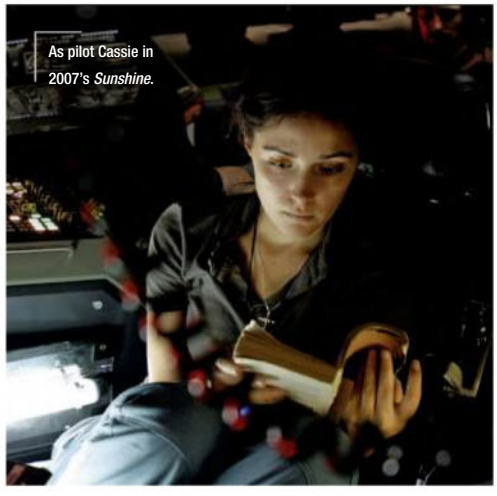
At the other end of the scale, presumably production on an enormous beast like *Attack Of The Clones* [4] or *X-Men: Apocalypse* has to be completely meticulous and less freeform. Do you mind being a cog in such a huge juggernaut?
Well, [on *X-Men*] behind the scenes it's just hilarious. Everyone's in their classic costumes and poor Oscar (*Isaac*) was blue and covered in tentacles. Nick Hoult is blue as well, Jen (*Lawrence*) is in her scaly costume. It's like *Saturday Night Live*, or something. Everyone is just standing around and it's hysterical. But I'm so lucky because I don't have to get dressed or anything, I'm just this mortal. I was really tickled to be asked back, though, because it's such a fun cast and I wasn't expecting it at all, I was really genuinely surprised. I am so proud to be part of that universe, it is such a different beast to some of my other films but it's so fun and the fans love it.

In the age of interconnected universes and release schedules plotted a decade in advance, would you be reluctant to sign up if another big franchise came along?
I really don't think it would give me


Revealing her comedy skills with Russell Brand in 2010's *Get Him To The Greek*.


As Grace in 2014's *Annie* reboot, with Quvenzhané Wallis.


With Nicholas Hoult, Lucas Till and Jennifer Lawrence in the upcoming *X-Men: Apocalypse*.


As pilot Cassie in 2007's *Sunshine*.

FOOTNOTES

[4] These included Amy Winehouse, Gwen Stefani, Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, the Spice Girls and, appropriately given her co-star, Katy Perry.

[5] Byrne will play Susan Sarandon's put-upon daughter in the upcoming LA-set film that she describes as a "sweet, heartfelt comedy".



pause. So many incredible actors do franchises then do independent films and then do theatre. It's a different kind of business now and everyone is across genres all the time.

Is there strength in numbers then? A kind of vindication that comes from the fact Academy Award-winners aren't above reaching for the capes and blue paint?
Yes, but it's not that you're thinking, "Well, everyone's doing it, so I should." Actually, they're just fun films and they're good films. The *Avengers* films, *Iron Man*, they're good quality and there are plenty of independent films that are really dull, too. Just because something has been made for eight dollars, it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be a great movie.

Words to live by. Looking to the small screen, *Damages* was a show that seemed to arrive at a really important time for prestige TV drama and arguably paved the way for modern hits like *The Good Wife* and *House Of Cards*. Did you have the feeling you were part of something special?
Damages, *Six Feet Under* and *The Sopranos* were out so the bar had definitely been set by HBO, but it was still early days in a sense. We came out the same year as *Mad Men*, in 2007, and so it definitely was part of the renaissance of television. I felt lucky to be a part of it and it did feel special. To be able to work with Glenn (*Close*) every day and to have this incredible story unfolding... I loved that period, I really enjoyed it and I would love to do more TV. I'm a huge TV watcher.

What are your current obsessions on the small screen?
I'd say *Vinyl* on HBO is fantastic and of course, I'm not biased at all (*laughs*) ❶. We've been watching *Girls*. I love it so much. I'm a huge fan, I've seen every episode. And we've been watching *The People V. O. J. Simpson*. It's fantastic. Our friend Sarah Paulson is on it, playing Marcia Clark, and she's great. It's so fun and campy.

Do you still find time to go out to the cinema?
To be honest, the other thing we've been watching a lot of is CNN. The theatre of politics is incredibly entertaining so we've been watching a lot of the primaries. It's so larger than life and on such a big scale compared to Australian politics. It's a foreign thing to me, so I try to wrap my head around it.

Finally, reboots and reconfigured franchises like *Star Wars* and even *Annie*, which you were in, seem to prompt all sorts of online uproar these days. Do you think it heaps too much pressure on these projects?
I suppose there is a scrutiny that's put on these things, especially if it's a remake of anything. Whether it's *Ghostbusters* or *Annie*, which was a remake that wasn't received well. They really changed the casting on that, obviously. But there's such vitriol, you know? It's so rare that people shine a light on people who are saying something positive.

These things are often powered by quite a small minority trying to get attention.
Exactly. Why is it only the people who say negative stuff about changing casting, whether it's from a man to a woman or changing the ethnicity of a character? I'm sure there are positive things that are being said, but those people never really get the microphone. E

FOOTNOTES

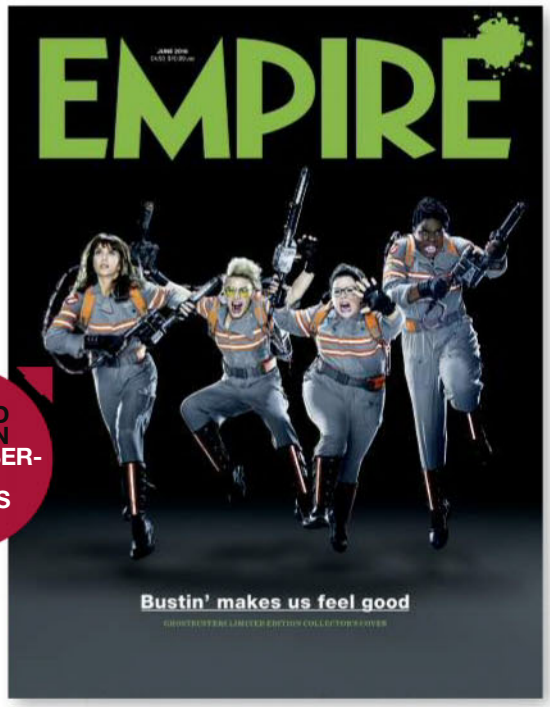
❻ She was Padmé's blink-and-you'll-miss-her handmaiden Dormé and looks back fondly on filming in Australia.

❼ Byrne's partner Bobby Cannavale stars in *Vinyl* and, having worked with him in *Spy* and *Annie*, she is "trying to hustle a part" in the '70s rock drama.

***BAD NEIGHBOURS 2* IS OUT ON MAY 6. *X-MEN: APOCALYPSE* IS OUT ON MAY 18. BOTH WILL BE REVIEWED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.**

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RE.VIEW



APRIL 28 – MAY 25, 2016 | EDITED *by* NICK DE SEMLYEN



NEW RELEASE

THE HATEFUL EIGHT

We get the behind-the-scenes lowdown from Tarantino and cast on his brutal Western, *The Hateful Eight*. (p. 130)

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Spotlight

★★★★

FROM **MAY 23** / CERT. **15**

DVD BR

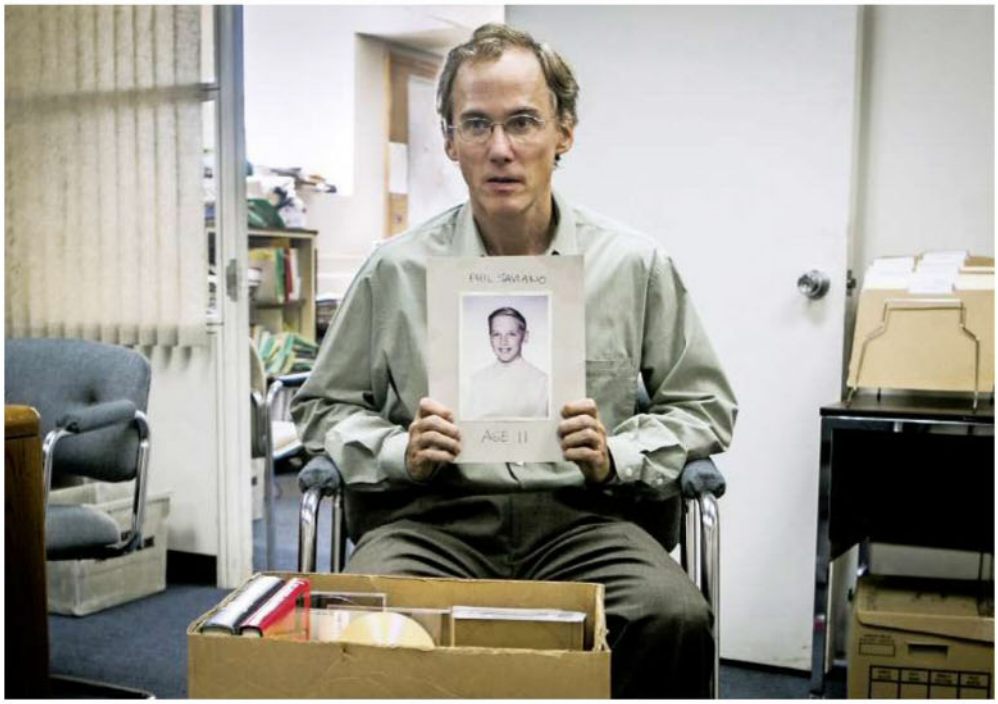
IT'S *THE GLOBE* WOT WON IT

THE REVENANT had seemed the surer bet, with its raw, suffering-star turn and its extreme-wilderness cinematography, filling every frame with roaring, pounding, storming drama. But after the Best Picture envelope was torn open at this year's Oscars, another, very different film's title was read out. One in which there was no dominant performance, and which let its drama unfurl steadily in boxy, beige-and-grey interiors, to the sound of file pages being flipped and pens scratching on notebooks. *Spotlight* bagging the big award may have been a surprise but, for all *The Revenant*'s visual genius, there were some — including industry mag *Variety* — who saw justice in the quieter film, which directly tackled real issues, prevailing.

Tom McCarthy's *Spotlight* isn't just about the Catholic church's cover-up of systemic child-abuse among its Boston clergy (and ultimately worldwide). It's also about the value of investigative journalism — that deliberate process which, 14 years on from the *Boston Globe*'s world-rattling story, has become widely devalued. It's something this home-entertainment release touches upon with a trio of featurettes. As well as a brief group interview with the real *Globe* Spotlight team, the filmmakers and cast lament the decline of true, 'slow' journalism which, as McCarthy says,

The *Boston Globe* Spotlight team: Walter 'Robby' Robinson (Michael Keaton), Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams) and Matt Carroll (Brian d'Arcy James).





"is a fundamental aspect of democracy."

Sadly these extras are more cursory than the film deserves. But at least *Spotlight* itself makes its points cogently and efficiently, much like the team at its heart (portrayed by Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams and Brian d'Arcy James). Of course, nobody is perfect, and some of the most powerful moments in *Spotlight* come when the limits of journalism, and journalists, are tested: most obviously when one character realises he'd allowed this story to slip through his fingers years before, or when another's concern to maintain exclusivity seemingly supercedes the very real public-interest value.

Like all great procedurals, there is joy to be had in watching based-on-reality people such as Walter Robinson (Keaton) and Mike Rezendes (Ruffalo) being really bloody good at what they do and making what they do count. And this is a masterclass in ensemble-wrangling, too, with the talents already mentioned bolstered by Stanley Tucci as the cantankerous lawyer in the thick of a pivotal case, and Liev Schreiber as the calmly diligent editor who sidesteps shouty-movie-boss clichés, nudging the investigation firmly but gently along. Rather like McCarthy himself, in fact, who, appropriately enough, has ensured this entire team of everyday heroes is played by people who are really bloody good at what they do and who make what they do count. **DAN JOLIN**

Top: *Boston Globe* journalist Mike Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo) visits lawyer Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci). **Above:** Child sex abuse victim Phil Saviano (Neal Huff).

ALSO OUT



Snoopy And Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **U** DVD BR

→ Charlie Brown tries, fails and tries again in a warm-hearted selection of vignettes. Flitting between his attempts to impress the little red-headed girl to Snoopy's fantasies of life as a World War I flying ace, it's patchy, but the bumbling heroes and animation are charming. **HOH**



The Assassin

★★★★

FROM **MAY 23** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ After a deceptively action-packed opening, Hou Hsiao-Hsien's gorgeous Chinese fable settles into a pace so languid, you'll wonder if it's on slow-mo. But while it doesn't match Zhang Yimou's *Hero* for dynamism, its world of trained killers and courtly scheming is packed with visuals that wouldn't look out of place in a gallery. **PDS**



The Danish Girl

★★★★

FROM **MAY 16** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ Copenhagen in the 1920s is the setting for Tom Hooper's tale of sexual-reassignment pioneers Lili Elbe (Eddie Redmayne) and Gerda Wegener (Alicia Vikander). Powered by Redmayne's awkward allure and Vikander's stoic, Oscar-winning performance, Hooper's film leaves you hungry for more on the trailblazing duo. **ET**

The Revenant

★★★★★

FROM **MAY 23** / CERT. **15**

DVD BR

HEART OF GLASS

IT WAS FORETOLD and so it came to pass: Leonardo DiCaprio finally won an Oscar. And all he had to do was spend *The Revenant*'s ten-month shoot bedding down in animal carcasses, risking hypothermia in icy rivers and eating (and then vomiting back up) bison liver. He's a vegetarian.

Do these hardships make it a great performance? The best of the last year? Not on their own, but DiCaprio's work here is astounding and often wordless. His pain, both emotional (dead son) and physical (angry bear), is often conveyed through just an expression or ragged breathing pattern. Or a massive gash on his neck. They may not have won their category, but the make-up team were no slouches either.

Set in the early 1800s, the film sees a crew of trappers ambushed by Native Americans in the wild Northern Plains. Their number decimated, they escape and resolve to travel back to their outpost, Fort Kiowa, some 200 miles away. Almost as soon as that journey begins, the



Will Poulter (Jim Bridger) does his best Spock impression.



"If you don't give me the Oscar, I'll shoot!"



Tom Hardy (John Fitzgerald) realises that he's left the oven on.

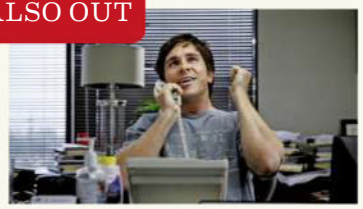
group's guide, Hugh Glass (DiCaprio), is mauled to (near) death by a bear, so the group splits up. The majority go on ahead, but three stay back to wait for Glass to die so they can give him a proper burial — half-scalped woodsman John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy), easily led youngster Jim Bridger (Will Poulter) and Glass' half-Native son, Hawk (Forrest Goodluck). Fitzgerald then kills Hawk, and persuades Bridger to leave Glass for dead — if no-one finds out, they'll still get their money. Of course, what they don't count on is Glass pulling himself from his shallow grave, vowing revenge and (very slowly) giving chase. Glass after Fitzgerald. DiCaprio after his golden statuette.

It's a true story in essence. The headline events — ambush, bear attack, journey against the odds — all happened, but the details of the tale have been embellished over nearly two centuries of retelling. These flourishes add necessary depth — imagine a film where Glass has no son and when he finally catches up with Fitzgerald and Bridger, he happily forgives them for leaving him to die alone. It's clear the myth is better than the reality.

Although DiCaprio took the acting plaudits, he has able support. Tom Hardy (nominated for Best Supporting Actor, but for some reason never really in the conversation as a winner) conveys a tangible sense of danger, while adopting a less high-pitched version of his Bane voice. Poulter, wide-eyed and naive, teeters on the brink of breakdown as events escalate.

This release is let down by its extras, consisting of just a 45-minute documentary and a selection of on-set photographs. And that documentary is on YouTube already. Given all the on-set difficulties the cast and crew faced, the innovative shooting methods of director Alejandro González Iñárritu — it was filmed with brand-new 6.5k ARRI 65 cameras using only natural light — and the subsequent critical success, it seems odd no-one thought to sit down to even record a commentary track. Even *Brother Bear* has a commentary track. **JONATHAN PILE**

ALSO OUT



The Big Short

★★★★

FROM **MAY 23** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ Adam McKay's Oscar-winning exploration of the financial crash of 2008, and the anti-heroes who predicted and profited from it, is one of the year's funniest comedies and scariest horror films in one unconventional package. McKay's loose directorial style is instrumental in making the sheer onslaught of arcane info palatable. **CH**



Joy

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ Jennifer Lawrence is Joy Mangano, a down-on-her-luck mother who invents a new mop with which she attempts to make her fortune. It's a semi-fictionalised story, which director David O. Russell peppers with interesting flourishes, like a fake soap opera. But he fails to nail the pacing, marking it as an also-ran in both his and Lawrence's careers. **JP**



Daddy's Home

★★★

FROM **MAY 2** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ *The Other Guys*' double act of Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg reunite for this patchy but entertainingly daft comedy about a stepfather and a biological father at eternal loggerheads. Occasionally it feels like comedy on autopilot — there are a few too many slapstick pratfalls. But it is, sporadically, hilarious. **JN**



TAXI: THE COMPLETE SERIES

★★★★★

FROM **MAY 30** / CERT. **12**

DVD

THE HIGHEST RANK

WITH *MORK & MINDY*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Diff'rent Strokes* and *Dallas* all making their debuts, 1978 was a golden year for American prime time. In terms of plaudits, though, *Taxi* leaves them for dust. Over the course of its bumpy five-year run (ABC dumped it in the lake; NBC dredged it back out), the show won 18 Emmys and four Golden Globes, and launched the careers of Danny DeVito, Christopher Lloyd and *The Simpsons'* co-creator Sam Simon. In an era of cynical reality-sitcoms, *Taxi* seems to have faded from the memory. This addictive box set, boasting all 114 episodes, pulls a timeless show back into focus.

Inspired by Night-Shifting For The Hip Fleet, a *New York Magazine* profile of the city's cabbies, *Taxi* wrenched the sitcom away from its cosy family tradition to a grungier blue-collar world, epitomised by the grotty garage of the Sunshine Cab Company (ironic name alert). Nobody wants to work there. Everyone's united by loneliness. And they all share a common enemy: Danny DeVito's volcanic dispatcher, Louie — a massive bastard in a bumblebee body.

Its title sequence says a lot about a show. Set to Bob James' sombre funk theme, this one opens with a yellow cab crossing Queensboro Bridge. The clip, barely seconds long, rolls on an endless loop. After a few episodes, you click: the cab's going nowhere. Going nowhere is the very essence of *Taxi* — instead of character arcs, its lives curve into a Möbius strip of eternal disappointment. Countless episodes offer a character an escape, only to wash their dreams down the gutter. Nobody learns. There's Tony (Tony Danza), a boxer who keeps getting knocked out; Bobby (Jeff Conaway), an actor so desperate he auditions to play

The Sunshine Cab Company (clockwise from left): Louie De Palma (Danny DeVito), Alex Reiger (Judd Hirsch), Elaine O'Connor-Nardo (Marilu Henner), Tony Banta (Tony Danza), Latka Gravas (Andy Kaufman) and Reverend Jim Ignatowski (Christopher Lloyd).





Top: Elaine, Alex, Bobby Wheeler (Jeff Conaway) and Tony don't believe John Burns (Randall Carver) when he says lunch is on him. **Above:** Latka feels the wrath from "volcanic dispatcher" Louie.

the horse in *Equus*; single-mum and wannabe artist Elaine (Marilu Henner); and helium-voiced immigrant mechanic Latka (Andy Kaufman), serial-killer of the English language ("I'm so hungry I could eat an owl"). The voice of reason is Judd Hirsch's Alex, a smart, jaded divorcé burdened with solving everybody else's problems. Alex is crucial: the show would be a bag of nuts without him.

The very first episode, *Like Father Like Daughter*, is no classic but it's a terrific tone-setter. Centred around Alex and a brittle reconciliation with his estranged daughter, it flips effortlessly from hilarity to heartbreak. This became *Taxi*'s USP: episodes often end not with a punchline but an emotional gut-punch. Even Louie, a character so despicable he drills a peek-hole in the ladies' loo (*Louie Goes Too Far*), is given flashes of pathos. In *Louie's Mother*, we get an unforgettable glimpse of his sad home life after his own mum abandons him (he hid her teeth during an argument).

Nurturing deep, complex characters, *Taxi* took on Big Issues (racism, divorce, homosexuality) but it never lost its surreal sense of humour. Enter '60s relic Jim Ignatowski — soup for a brain, heart of a child, and one of the weirdest creations in sitcom history. Beamed down in Season 2, Christopher Lloyd's shambling, drug-hoovering burn-out is comedy gold in triple-denim. He gets the biggest laughs, the funniest episodes, even the best backstory — in genius flashback show *The Road Not Taken*, Jim's revealed as a dreary Harvard über-nerd who gets permanently werewolfed by a hash brownie. The biggest Jim mystery of all — how the hell he manages to drive a cab — never gets answered.

Taxi's not without its shark-jumps. *Travels With My Dad*, a rare, glaring dud, sees Tony join the merchant navy, climaxing with a WTF kung-fu bar-brawl in Singapore. Perhaps more jarring is the fate of Latka: Kaufman got so bored playing him, producers retro-fitted a multiple-personality disorder for the third season. Latka's various mutations (most famously, polyester playboy Vic Ferrari) showcase Kaufman's range, but a once-cute character curdles into something supremely creepy.

Still, this is nitpicking. The very best sitcoms make you feel like you're part of a surrogate family. This reissue is like welcoming back your favourite mad uncle. Keep an eye out for before-they-made-it Easter egg cameos from Ted Danson (hairdresser), George Wendt (pest controller) and a young Tom Hanks getting stoned and face-planting a carpet. It's a Jim episode, obviously. **SIMON CROOK**

ALSO OUT



London Spy

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **TBC** DVD BR

→ Cold War paranoia meets the Vauxhall club scene as Ben Whishaw's sweet, chaotic Danny tries to solve the death of his secret-agent lover in this slow-burning thriller. Whishaw is electric, and his scenes with Charlotte Rampling's Frances grip like a vice, as Danny is pulled into a web of secrets, lies and monstrous threat. **HOH**



Heroes Reborn

★★

FROM **MAY 9** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ *Heroes*' demise is something creator Tim Kring has struggled with since its 2010 cancellation, and this 13-part miniseries is his apology. But it isn't satisfying. The conspiracy yarn is half-baked and the show's new stars too bland. With several of the original's best characters absent, heroes are precisely what this follow-up lacks. **WT**



The Night Manager

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ The BBC's £20 million John le Carré adaptation has a simple set-up — a hotel employee-turned spy (Tom Hiddleston) weevils his way into the inner circle of an abominable arms dealer (Hugh Laurie) and tries not to die — but the results are slick and sophisticated. It's an infiltration thriller with all the class of *Notorious*. **NDS**



The Hateful Eight

★★★★

FROM **MAY 9** / CERT. **18**

DVD BR

A WINTER'S TALE

LADIES AND gentlemen, we have reached Peak Tarantino. Now let's be clear, as you settle into your seats: this ain't no bad thing in this town. The markers are all there: a very familiar cast of characters (Samuel L. Jackson, Kurt Russell, Michael Madsen); pulse-quickening monologues; shocking violence that no longer shocks; a thin veil of parody hanging over proceedings.

The film opens with bounty hunter John Ruth (Russell) delivering black-of-eye outlaw Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) to Red Rock to hang — a too-long journey during which they collect Marquis Warren (Jackson) and Sheriff Chris Mannix (Walton Goggins) en route, before stopping at Minnie's Haberdashery for coffee and comfort. The former is in plentiful supply, but they're in for a shock on the latter. This is where the film picks up in both pace and punch (no pun intended) and the good ol' fashioned killing begins.

This is not the same old Tarantino, though. Ennio Morricone scores for the first time, drawing a sweeping and ominous sound that anchors the almost-three-hour film beautifully. It's matched only by the startling landscapes, Tarantino and director of photography Robert Richardson going to town with Ultra Panavision 70.

With such texture and ambition, the special features here are disappointing. There's an interesting, if slightly prosaic ode to 70mm, footage of the Comic-Con panel and a standard 'making of'. But when the main event looks like *this*, it seems churlish to complain. TERRI WHITE

EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

EMPIRE SPOILER ALERT!

WORDS **DAMON WISE**

TARANTINO AND CAST TALK US THROUGH THE HIGH POINTS OF THEIR WYOMING WHITE-KNUCKLER



05.14

"Who The Hell Are You?"

James Parks has the distinction of playing the same character in two Tarantino movies, appearing as Sheriff Edgar McGraw in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* and *Death Proof* (he also reprises the character in *Machete*). For *The Hateful Eight* he learned to drive a six-horse stagecoach. "I had to train for three months," Parks says. "The horses pull hard, so pretty quickly it can get out of hand. They used to tell me that you can go from hero to zero in one second."

14.33

Daisy Takes A Hit

A controversial scene sees bounty hunter John Ruth (Kurt Russell) elbow criminal Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) in the face. "I don't give a fuck about the fact she's a woman," says Tarantino. "She's a *character*. Daisy's definitely gonna have people on her side, rooting for her. Then you realise how fucking crazy she is and all of a sudden, John Ruth seem reasonable."



23.42

Cold Comfort

Chris Mannix (Walton Goggins), who claims to be the new sheriff of Red Rock, appears, wrapped in a blanket. In the screenplay, the character had a "pimp coat", which Goggins donned for his first day on set. "I walk up," he recalls, "and Quentin says, 'Yeah, take that off.' I say, 'But it's 12 degrees outside.' He says, 'Yeah, take it off.' But Quentin was so smart to do it. It plays a big part in the story: Mannix and his journey to getting warm."



36.00

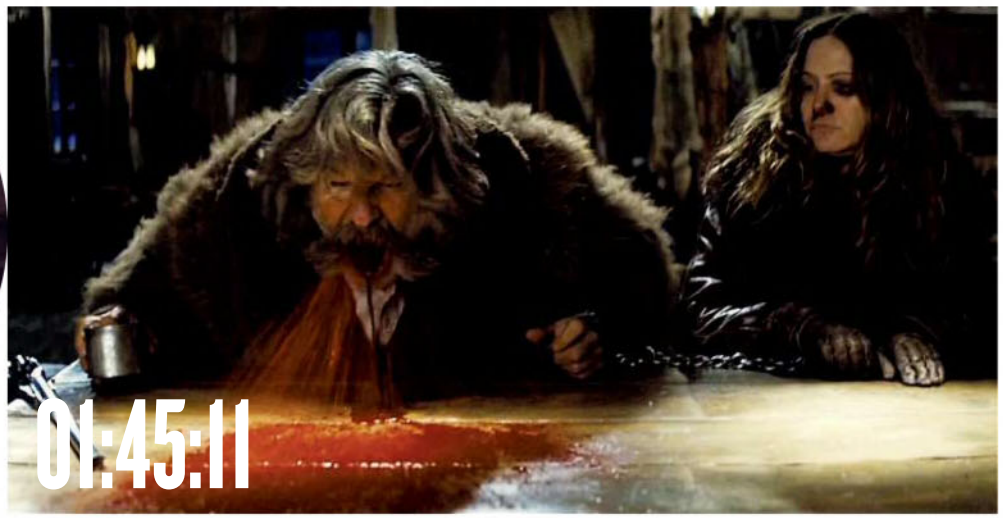
Minnie's House

Minnie's Haberdashery is described in the script as "a slightly bigger than normal stagecoach stopover" and is where the rest of the story plays out. "I brought in Yohei Taneda, who did the Japanese sets for *Kill Bill*," says Tarantino. "This is a set that we have to live in — and it has to be lived in. There is an *Iceman Cometh* vibe I was thinking about as I was writing. I was like, 'Oh, this is turning into a play.'"



50.29
The Cow-Puncher
Michael Madsen's Joe Gage scribbles his life story. "I've written four books of short stories and poems," says Madsen. "And it's funny, because every time I've given Quentin one, he's never said a word. But before this scene he goes, 'You know why I made Joe do that? Because you're a writer.' So it's like a personal compliment, that he allowed me to have my guy do that."

01:25:37
Silent Night
Bob (Demián Bichir) sits down to play a seasonal tune at the piano. "I was sure it was gonna be a one-finger version," says Bichir, "but I got all kinds of different exercises to do. My coach and I worked on a Debussy piece — I got *obsessed*."



01:45:11
Not The Gourmet Shit
In the first of several shocking twists, John Ruth drinks a cup of coffee that would not meet with approval from *Pulp Fiction*'s Jimmy. In fact, it's been poisoned. Says Madsen, "When I first read the script, I remember thinking, 'I don't wanna be the cowboy fellow, man. I wanna be John Ruth, man!' But then I get to the part where John Ruth's fucking throwing up blood on the floor and I go, 'Oh well, maybe not...'" Interestingly, in Tarantino's script he spells coffee "coffy" throughout —which may be a reference to the 1973 blaxploitation classic. Or typos.



02:03:46
"And I'm Jody..."
The first sighting of Channing Tatum as Jody, Daisy's brother. "This is a very peculiar gang," says Bichir. "We love playing whatever role is necessary in order to achieve our goals. We're not just vulgar burglars: we see it as an art form. What is this Mexican doing in this gang? What is an English guy doing in this gang? It's a very interesting mix. It's almost like a theatre company."

02.16.51
Kill Bell
Zoë Bell's Six-Horse Judy is ignominiously tossed into a well. "I've worked in some pretty full-on conditions," says the QT regular, "especially as a stunt girl, if the conditions are a bit too extreme for an actress. For the scene where I'm thrown around in the snow, my assumption was that I was going to have to do it myself." Luckily for Bell, they used a dummy.



02.38.35
And Then There Were Two
Both seriously wounded, Chris Mannix and Major Marquis Warren sentence Daisy Domergue to death. But is Mannix *really* the sheriff of Red Rock? "I can never tell you!" says Goggins. "What's interesting is that I asked Quentin that very question the first time we sat down, and he said, 'What do *you* think?' And as I was about to answer he said, 'I don't wanna know the answer to that question.' So *I* know. But *nobody* else knows."



Kim Newman's MOVIE DUNGEON

MUTANTS, MONSTERS AND MEDICAL MISADVENTURES

ILLUSTRATION **JOHN ROYLE**

IT'S NOT A GREAT month for arms in the Dungeon, with two suffering DIY amputations. The first is played for horror in Anthony Woodley's low-budget British pandemic picture *The Carrier*, Jack Gordon taking a chisel to Billy Clarke as passengers in an airliner flee the UK, seeking refuge in infection-free Greenland. Only problem is, the leprosy-like plague is already on board, and even the uninfected are driven mad. The mutants are surprisingly mild, but the 'normals' are mostly cracked and vicious. Suspenseful in the air, it loses its grip slightly when the plane is grounded.

The second arm-hack is played for bitter laughs in New Zealand's *I Survived A Zombie Holocaust*, the victim telling a caterer who has made a hash of post-chop cauterisation, "You can't even cook my arm properly." A mix of smarts and crassness, Guy Pigden's film sees a zombie outbreak interrupt the making of a zombie movie. Modest innovations include a poor sap discovering he has an undead penis, and a Maori rugby player seeing off shambling hordes with a *haka*.

Away from luckless limbs, the French directing team of Alexandre Bustillo and Julien Maury have schoolkids explore an abandoned film studio in *Among The Living*. The brats annoy a mad ex-soldier nesting among old sets, and his hulking monster son tracks them to their homes to kill them. A cross between *The Goonies* and *The Funhouse*, it seesaws between icky sadism and creepy chills.

Heading north, Chris W. Mitchell's *The Pool* is a Dutch don't-go-in-the-woods film. When Dad (Gijs Scholten van Aschat) cuts barbed wire so his family and friends can hike beyond the tame trails and camp sites, it's plain things will go badly. An idyllic lake turns out to be a haunted trap, in a blend of the middle-classes-self-destruct-on-holiday mode of *Force Majeure* with the eerie-spirit-of-angry-nature vibe of *The Blair Witch Project*.

Jason Bognacki's *Mark Of The Witch* (aka *Another*) harks back to 1970s TV movies (like the classic *Satan's School For Girls*) as teenager Jordyn (face-to-watch Paulie Rojas) is targeted by a witch cult bent on driving her mad. The story is slight, but it's a stylish effort, with dazzling, disorientating supernatural apparitions.

Finally, Uli Edel's *Pay The Ghost* has Nicolas Cage huffing around New York on Hallowe'en in search of the witch/ghost/demon who abducted his moppet son. Cage is on subdued form in the stock role of the dad who'd go to hell (or at least a dark basement full of creepy ghost kids) to get his child back, while Edel (whose credits range from *Last Exit To Brooklyn* to *The Little Vampire*) works hard to make the city unnerving. But does the ghost get paid? You'll have to watch to find out.

"I CONSIDER MYSELF A SCREENWRITER, FIRST AND FOREMOST." "JUST REMEMBER THAT MOST PEOPLE ON SET CONSIDER YOU THEIR BITCH, FIRST AND FOREMOST."
I SURVIVED A ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST



PICKS OF THE MONTH

Frankenstein



→ Bernard Rose's radical adaptation of *Frankenstein* sets Mary Shelley's story in contemporary Los Angeles. Scientists Danny Huston and Carrie-Anne Moss use a 3D printer to create the parts for an innocent being (Xavier Samuel), who is thrown out amongst street people when tumorous growths mar his beauty. One of the goriest Frankenstein films ever made, it's also literate — using parts of the book usually left out of the movies — and gets to grips with the themes of the story in fresh, affecting ways.

Dixi



→ All three seasons of the bright, inventive, addictive CBBC mystery series *Dixi* are available online at bbc.co.uk, viewable as bite-sized episodes or explorable with internet bells and whistles. The social-media-addicted pupils of Drew Fletcher Academy team up to hunt a hacker, a spook and a troll — bringing the kid-detective premise up to date with charm and wit. If there's any justice, the young, talented cast will end up being the leads of *Star Wars: Episode IX*.

American Horror Project: Volume 1

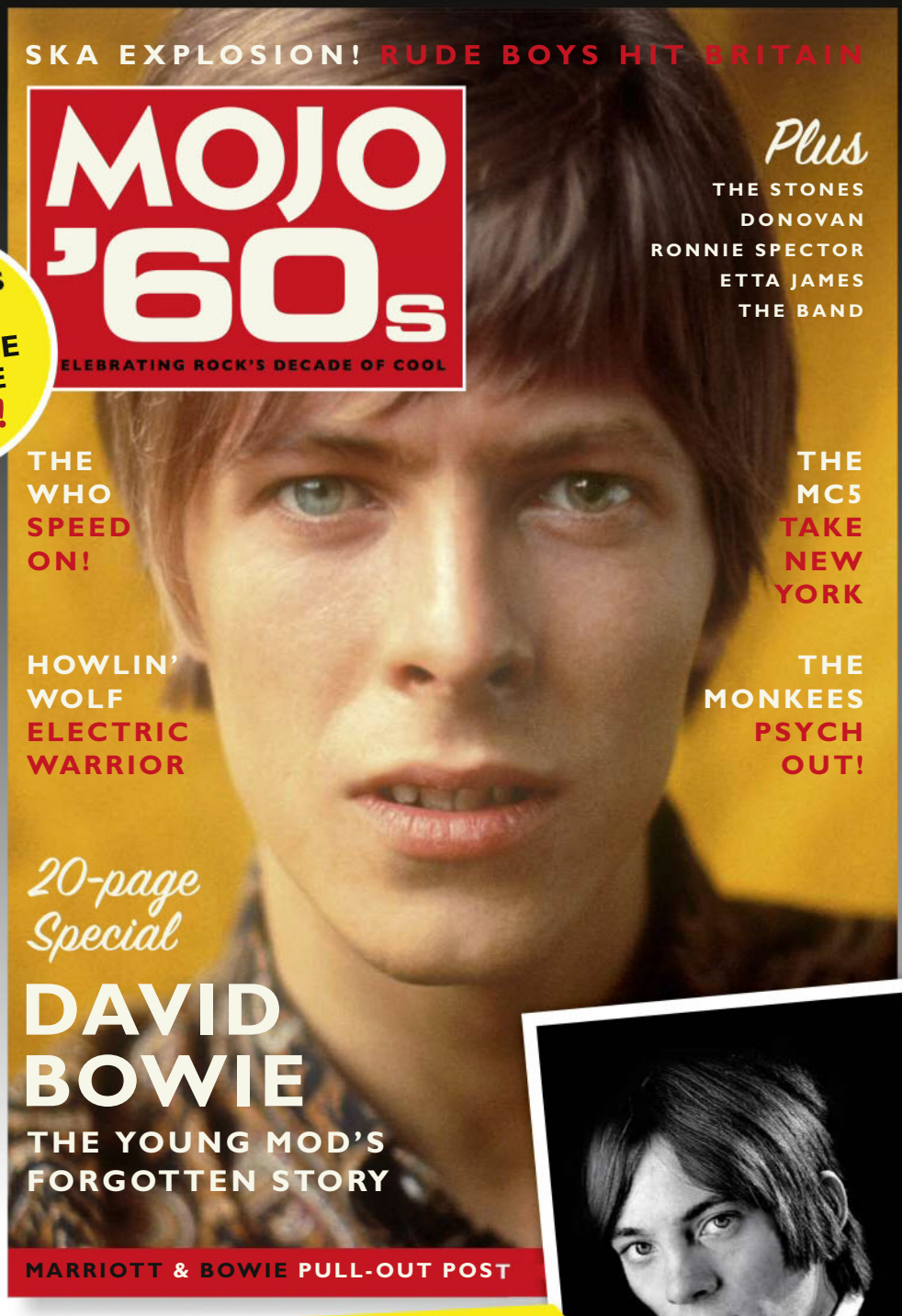


→ This extras-heavy collection assembles three genre efforts — suspended deliriously between art and exploitation — from the Weird Hippie Shit archives. A mix of wistfulness and gross-out, the standout is Matt Cimber's *The Witch Who Came From The Sea* (1976), exploring the psyche of a disturbed Millie Perkins. Also included: Christopher Speeth's funfair-run-by-vampires tale *Malatesta's Carnival Of Blood* (1973), and Robert Allen Schnitzer's occult mystery *The Premonition* (1976).

• ILLUSTRATION: PETER STRAIN (KIM PORTRAIT)

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THE CRIB SHEET

TERRENCE MALICK

AS MALICK'S *KNIGHT OF CUPS* HITS CINEMAS, HERE'S OUR GUIDE TO THE REST OF HIS OEUVRE WORDS **IAN FREER**

FILM GUIDE	FILM PLOT	ARTIEST SHOT	VOICEOVER LINES	STARS CUT
 1 **BADLANDS** (1973)	Teenager Holly (Sissy Spacek) and her James Dean-alike boyfriend Kit (Martin Sheen) start a killing spree in South Dakota.	Holly's dollhouse beautifully burning to the strains of Carl Orff. It's THE DEATH OF INNOCENCE, PEOPLE!	"My father kept their wedding cake in the freezer... After the funeral, he gave it to the yardman." Holly (Sissy Spacek)	No-one. Not even Malick's cameo as 'Architect At The Door'.
 2 **DAYS OF HEAVEN** (1978)	1916, the Texas Panhandle. Bill (Richard Gere) and girlfriend Abby (Brooke Adams), posing as brother and sister, become workers for a dying farmer (Sam Shepard), who falls for Abby.	Big close-ups of locusts precede a full-on plague. Biblical symbolism a go-go.	"There was never a perfect person around. You just got half a devil and half an angel in you." Linda (Linda Manz)	No-one, although overshooting meant DP Nestor Almendros had to leave for another project.
 3 **THE THIN RED LINE** (1998)	A portrait of the World War II battle of Mount Austen from different perspectives: the US infantry, the Melanese natives, the frogs.	Miranda Otto shot upside down on a swing. Also see Jessica Chastain in *The Tree Of Life*.	"We. We together. One being. Flow together like water, 'til I can't tell you from me." Pvt. Bell (Ben Chaplin)	Bill Pullman, Lukas Haas, Mickey Rourke — buh-bye.
 4 **THE NEW WORLD** (2005)	Virginia, 1607. English Captain John Smith (Colin Farrell) is captured by the Powhatan tribe but is saved by princess Pocahontas (Q'orianka Kircher).	Ripples in a river that go on. And on. And on. And on.	"He is like a tree. He shelters me. I lie in his shade." Pocahontas (Q'orianka Kilcher)	Colin Farrell and Christopher Plummer were both drastically diminished. Or as Plummer diplomatically puts it, "cut to shit".
 5 **THE TREE OF LIFE** (2011)	Jack O'Brien (Sean Penn) remembers his childhood with a stern father (Brad Pitt) in 1950s Texas. Meanwhile, the Universe is born.	The O'Brien family reunite on a windswept beach. Is it a dream? Is it the Afterlife? Is it Skegness?	"Help each other. Love everyone. Every leaf. Every ray of light. Forgive." Mrs. O'Brien (Jessica Chastain)	Sean Penn's role was radically reduced: "I didn't at all find on the screen the emotion of the script."
 6 **TO THE WONDER** (2012)	Loved up in Paris, the relationship between Neil (Ben Affleck) and Marina (Olga Kurylenko) deteriorates in the US.	Kurylenko, back to camera, dancing in a field at twilight. None more Malick.	"I had no faith. You knew. Were you afraid?" Neil (Ben Affleck)	Jessica Chastain, Rachel Weisz, Michael Sheen, Amanda Peet and Barry Pepper — all gone.

Also out

MORE OF THIS MONTH'S NEW RELEASES



I Am Wrath

★

FROM **MAY 16** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ John Travolta is unconvincing in a revenge thriller so moronic that 1980s Steven Seagal would've turned his nose up at it. Bemoaning America's gun-violence problem, then addressing it by having Travolta's ex-black ops bereaved husband shoot everyone repeatedly, this drivel doesn't even have the decency to call its hero Ian Wrath. **NA**



In The Heart Of The Sea

★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **TBC** DVD BR

→ Ron Howard's based-on-*Moby-Dick* harpoon-a-thon sees a crew of whalers become whalees, as they're stalked across the Seven Seas by a homicidal CG cetacean. Given that it's populated by cardboard characters and has a peculiar green tint as if shot through a seaweed filter, you're better off tackling the book that inspired it. Or re-watching *Jaws*. **NDS**



Miss Hokusai

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ Keiichi Hara's eye-popping anime focuses on the daughter of legendary painter Katsushika Hokusai, herself a talented artist. O-Ei's love for her blind sister is relayed with great tenderness, in a gorgeously animated tale that explores artistic inspiration amid supernatural goings-on. Sadly, a stuttering story may stop you being totally spirited away. **ES**



Mojave

★

FROM **MAY 9** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ William Monahan's thrill-free thriller concerns a depressed actor (Garrett Hedlund) and the drifter (Oscar Isaac) who starts to stalk him. Full of statements like, "I don't even know if you exist, as I understand existence," it strives for existential profundity but winds up a turgid bore. Drink a shot every time someone calls someone "brother", and you'll die. **NDS**

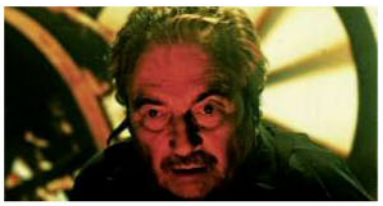


The 5th Wave

★★

FROM **MAY 23** / CERT. **15** DVD BR

→ Another teenage girl, another apocalypse. As Chloë Grace Moretz endures waves of alien attacks, it appears we might be in for a tougher, smarter YA film than usual. Unfortunately, it quickly devolves into yet another dull romantic triangle, with a plot tangled in overly complex mythology. It's one *Wave* you're probably best off not catching. **WT**



The Forbidden Room

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ A suffocating submarine crew, a sentient moustache comforting the widow of the man it used to belong to... there is *nothing* comparable to this portmanteau film by Winnipeg installation-artist-cum-director Guy Maddin. Those looking for a linear narrative will find it infuriating. But for those who persevere, there are thrilling and demented fairy tales to enjoy. **JMC**



The Forgotten

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **TBC** DVD

→ Shot on a set-for-demolition council estate, the directorial debut of Oliver Frampton is as much a study of British society's underclass as a horror movie. Revolving around a 14-year-old who starts hearing noises through his bedroom wall, it's a slow-burning tale with a heavily signposted twist, but there's plenty of armrest-clawing fun along the way. **JMC**



Three Days In Auschwitz

★★

FROM **MAY 9** / CERT. **E** DVD

→ There's no doubting the sincerity of Philippe Mora's personal quest to understand Auschwitz, the infamous Nazi concentration camp where eight members of his immediate family died. But it offers few new insights, is plagued with terrible camerawork, and its Eric Clapton score is a complete tonal misfire — guitar solos and the Holocaust make for odd bedfellows. **JN**



Victor Frankenstein

★★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12** DVD BR

→ Max Landis and Paul McGuigan's reanimation of Mary Shelley's Gothic horror classic wasn't everybody's cup of formaldehyde. But for those who tuned into its steampunk-meets-*Sherlock* sensibility, there was much to enjoy: not least James McAvoy's bug-eyed mad scientist and Daniel Radcliffe's equally go-for-broke reinvention of Igor. **WT**

ADVENTURES IN STREAMING



EACH ISSUE, OUR INTREPID WRITER FOLLOWS NETFLIX'S COMPUTER-CALIBRATED RECOMMENDATIONS, GOING WHEREVER THE TRAIL LEADS

WORDS **SIMON CROOK**

Westerns



GREAT GENRES NEVER die. They just get reinvented. In this shiny superhero age, Hollywood's slapped a Least Wanted poster up for the neglected Western, but, as this marathon proves, it remains an astonishingly adaptable genre. Still, if you want confirmation of how unfashionable cowboys are, Netflix doesn't even list "Westerns" in its search categories. Dig around, though, and there's buried gold waiting to be excavated.

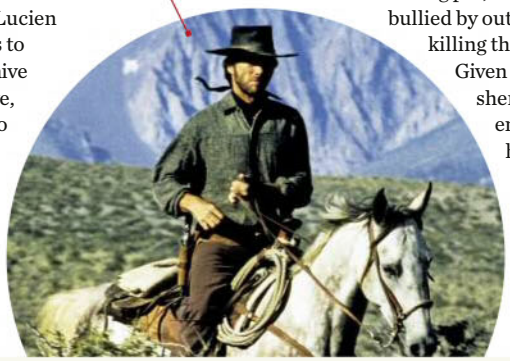
First up: ***The Lone Ranger***. Or, as at it should've been called, *The Magnificent Mr. Tonto*. Reteaming with Gore Verbinski, this is Johnny Depp's attempt to Jack Sparrow-ise the Western, reinterpreting Tonto as a Comanche Buster Keaton in stripy Kiss make-up — a scene-gulping performance so bracingly bizarre that Armie Hammer's masked avenger gets relegated to sidekick status. Following *Wild Wild West*, *Jonah Hex* and *Cowboys & Aliens*, *The Lone Ranger*'s box-office bellyflopping suggests the Blockbuster Western is a seriously cursed subgenre. Okay, so it's convoluted, overblown and seems to last longer than a trip to Pluto, but there are bursts of brilliance too, and it's worth catching for its two runaway-train action sequences. No other director constructs set-pieces quite like Verbinski. They're like crazed Heath Robinson contraptions — intricate, escalating chain-reactions that fizz and clatter with breathless invention.



Another heroic "injun" features in the rambling ***Nevada Smith***, a prequel to *The Carpetbaggers* (yep, prequels existed in 1966). After merciless outlaws slaughter his parents, a Sioux "half-breed" embarks on a revenge odyssey. The legendary Lucien Ballard's cinematography deploys looming panoramas to enhance Smith's isolation, and his character arc, from naive kid to icy gunslinger, is compelling, but there's a massive, trumpeting elephant in the saloon bar — we're meant to swallow a blond, blue-eyed Steve McQueen, then 36, as a 16 year-old Native American. What *is* authentic is McQueen's insane, DIY stunt-work — check out the notorious cattle-stampede, 40 minutes in, that nearly trampled McQueen into a man-burger.



Like *Nevada Smith*, ***Slow West*** is an episodic, coming-of-age Western, but wilfully weird and melancholic. Fresh from the Scottish Highlands, Kodi Smit-McPhee wanders the frontier searching for his long-lost love, accompanied by Michael Fassbender's devious, cheroot-chewing bounty hunter. Seen through Smit-McPhee's outsider eye, familiar Wild West tropes suddenly seem alien and exotic. Typical scene: a gunfight during an absinthe binge. This is the directorial debut of The Beta Band's John Maclean, and you could argue he's spirited his group's gonzo folktronica into cinematic form. It's ultra-ironic, bittersweet and absurdly funny — if Jim Jarmusch and early Coen Brothers are your jam, take a ride.



From *Slow West* to slow Western. After Maclean's genre-deconstruction job, ***Open Range*** looks obdurately old-school. Paced at a casual mosey before blasting into violence, Kevin Costner's love-letter to the genre's golden age pits Costner and Robert Duvall's freegrazing cowboys against Michael Gambon's mega-bastard rancher — a turf-war settled in a blistering real-time shootout that, for my money, is one of the very best in the genre. Scuzzy realism undercuts Costner's romanticised West, but with its old-timers, shady sheriffs, saloon scuffles and macho code of honour, it plays like a forgotten Howard Hawks classic. Shot in 2003, it could well be the last truly traditional studio Western, and thunders off into the sunset in emphatic style.

A Western marathon without Clint is like a gun without a bullet. ***High Plains Drifter*** is by far Eastwood's most subversive oater, contorting the Spaghetti Western into hellish gothic-horror. Arriving through a distorted heat-haze, soundtracked by a hooting choir that sounds like an owl sat on a drawing pin, Clint's man-with-no-name rides into a town bullied by outlaws. So far, so familiar, but his reward for killing them is God-like control over the populace. Given they stood back and watched their last sheriff get graphically bullwhipped to death, the ensuing tyranny's fully deserved. Clint's anti-hero makes a total mockery of the Western's black-hat/white-hat moral simplicity. Just who the hell *is* he? The sheriff's brother? The sheriff's ghost? An angel? A demon? It's an unanswerable question, left dangling in its eerie final shot, and likely to brain-worm you for the rest of your viewing life.

• ILLUSTRATION: PETER STRAIN

NEW TO STREAMING

The Black Stallion

★★★★

OUT **MAY 1** / CERT. **U**

N

DARK HORSE



Why the long face?

THE MISTS OF time have obscured *The Black Stallion*, a big Oscar-nominated hit in 1979, yet now largely forgotten. It's worthy of rediscovery, though — a film that glides from hypnotically beautiful, wordless art film to fist-pumping sports movie. A transition you don't see very often.

It begins with a boy (Kelly Reno) on a cruise with his father. It's a place where nobody notices him — in a perfect, playful introductory shot, the boy is only revealed as a speck in the distance after someone steps out of the camera's way — and he wanders freely, developing an interest in a wild horse being kept on board. A storm hits the ship and it sinks, the boy and the horse seemingly the only survivors. The pair are washed to a deserted island, fascinated and frightened by each other.

This stretch of the film is cinema to sink into. The two build a tentative silent relationship, every feeling on both sides clear thanks to Carol Ballard's direction, coaxing a performance from Reno that always seems wholly instinctual; Robert Dalva's fluid editing; and, perhaps above all, Caleb Deschanel's dreamy cinematography. It's the visual moments that stick with you, the setting's very basic components — sand, sky, water — given an otherworldly look by the way it's all framed. When the castaways finally come together, the child offering a nervous hand filled with food he's foraged, it's held in one long, exquisitely composed shot, the sort that makes you feel like you need a little break to recover.

It's a shame this portion of the story has to end. Most could be quite content watching these two galloping through the waves for another 60 minutes, but in the film's latter stages we're compensated with Mickey Rooney, so it's hard to complain. The child and the beast are brought back to civilisation, both needing to find a place for themselves in a world they no longer fit, which they do with the help of Rooney's horse trainer. They, and we, find a different kind of happiness. But they, and we, can't help but long to be back on that island. **OLLY RICHARDS**

ALSO STREAMING



THE COURT JESTER

N

A cross between *Game Of Thrones* and *Duck Soup*, Danny Kaye's medieval comedy-musical is ludicrously funny. Highlights: the chorus line of knights and the iconic "flagon with the dragon" sequence.

FROM MAY 25



MAGGIE

SM

Arnold Schwarzenegger's zombie film reveals a quieter, more vulnerable side to the star: less Austrian Oak than Weeping Willow. It's the most interesting, and best, movie he's made since his un-retirement.

FROM MAY 6



SPIES LIKE US

A

A Chevy Chase/Dan Aykroyd caper that's notable for its bizarre Paul McCartney theme tune ("Ooh, ooh, what do you do?") and numerous cameos from A-list directors. Ten points if you spot Joel Coen.

FROM MAY 12



FUNNY GIRL

N

Barbra Streisand's defining screen role (if you don't count Roz Focker) bagged her the Best Actress Oscar in 1967. She's superb as Fanny Brice, a vaudeville star in a troubled marriage.

FROM MAY 18



TRAINWRECK

SM

Far from a trainwreck, Judd Apatow's latest has a claim to being the funniest movie of 2015. Amy Schumer is winningly debauched in her first starring role, while LeBron James steals the show as an über-thrifty version of himself.

FROM MAY 20



PASSENGER 57

A

Long before *Con Air* and its daft villain names, this Wesley Snipes sky-thriller brought us Charles Rane, aka "The Rane Of Terror", played by Bruce Payne. Who we sincerely hope is known to his friends as "The Payne Of Terror".

FROM MAY 5



WHERE EAGLES DARE

A

This World War II belter sees Clint Eastwood and Richard Burton storm a Nazi mountain stronghold. There are zero eagles, but plenty of daring — the cable-car fistfight is an all-timer.

FROM NOW



Ran

★★★★★

FROM **MAY 2** / CERT. **12**

DVD BR

WAY OF THE SAMURAI

IF TRAGEDY IS a violation of personal, psychological or political order (and so say the boffins in the Longman volume *Shakespearean Tragedy*), then pity the warlord Hidetora, the central figure in Akira Kurosawa's war-torn epic *Ran*. He suffers the full trinity of injury.

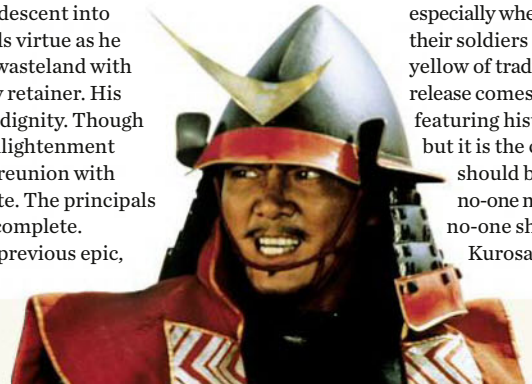
Placing your pity might prove troublesome; it's certainly an alien emotion for the iron-fisted Hidetora (Tatsuya Nakadai, a veteran of *Yojimbo* and *Kagemusha*), whose reign is revealed as a maelstrom of tyranny and mutilation — though such was the way of things in the feudal age; he maintained order. The travesty, and the tragedy, arrives when Hidetora splits his empire among his three sons. This prompts his youngest, Saburo (Daisuke Ryû), to challenge the decision. Like Lear with Cordelia, Hidetora banishes his upstart offspring. This sparks a cruel, internecine conflict, itself a tragic violation of the natural order.

The film is Kurosawa's take on *King Lear*, though the director deviates from Shakespeare's approach to this ancient tale by forging a blood-soaked backstory for his hoary potentate. There's a spiritual dimension here, too. Hidetora, aware of his descent into madness, edges towards virtue as he stumbles through the wasteland with his jester and a solitary retainer. His debasement gives him dignity. Though being a tragedy, this enlightenment — and the subsequent reunion with Saburo — comes too late. The principals fall and the tragedy is complete. Kurosawa claimed his previous epic, *Kagemusha*, was a trial run for *Ran*, and certainly the latter is more tightly plotted and more personal. Indeed, some see the story's betrayals as mirroring the filmmaker's own professional journey.

Above: They were having a bard day. **Below:** Land of the rising son.

"Long, boring and beautiful," wrote *Vanity Fair* on its release in 1985, and for some the set-up might seem too stately, too slow. But how one could find the film's march into war anything but exhilarating is baffling. The battle sequences are immense — the director's long lenses capturing scenes that are epic in execution and expertly edited.

It's during these battles that the new restoration (digital 4k) comes into its own, magnifying the visual splendour, especially when the three armies meet, their soldiers clad in the red, blue and yellow of traditional *Noh* drama. The release comes with a disc of extras, featuring histories and interviews, but it is the cleaned-up visuals that should be most celebrated. Just as no-one makes war like the samurai, no-one shoots a war film like Kurosawa. WILL LAWRENCE



ALSO OUT



Madigan

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **12** DVD

→ Three years before directing *Dirty Harry*, Don Siegel brought us Mucky Madigan, the rule-smashing New York detective at the centre of this hardboiled yarn. There are two strong performances — Richard Widmark as the flinty hero and Henry Fonda as his troubled superior — but the film itself is disappointingly by-the-book. **NDS**



The House Of The Seven Gables

★★★★

FROM **MAY 16** / CERT. **12** DVD

→ The sight of Vincent Price crooning may be enough to chill you to the bone in this macabre melodrama from director Joe May. Based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, it's an entertaining effort that's spurred on by the schemes of Price and his chancer brother, as they feud over the family fortune. **ES**

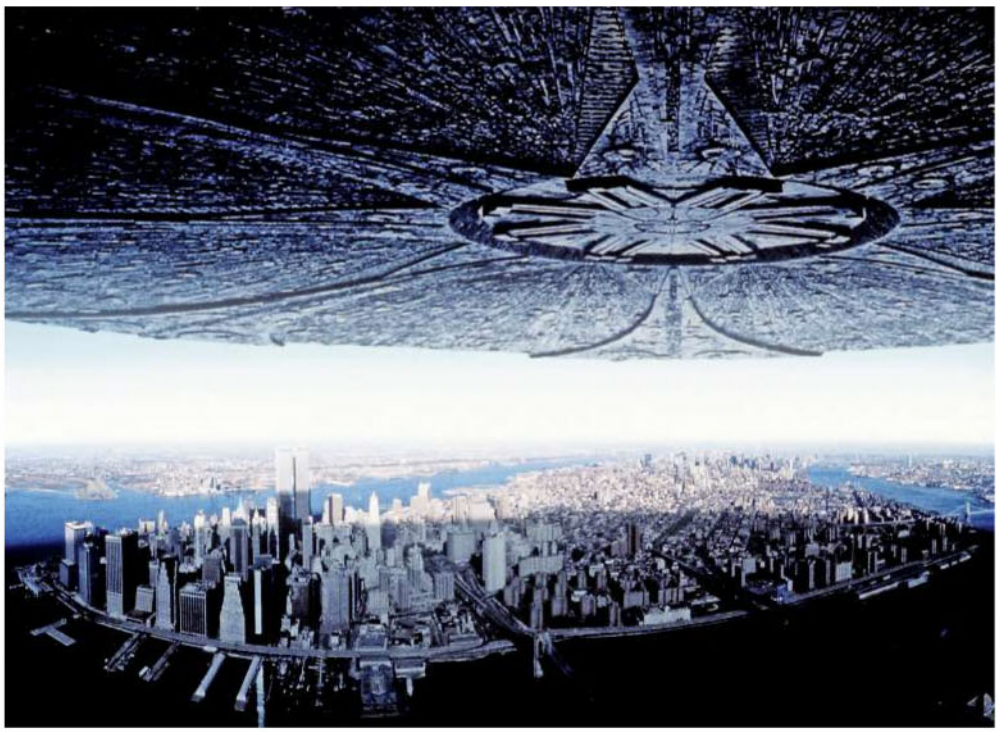


Pink String And Sealing Wax

★★★

FROM **NOW** / CERT. **U** BR

→ With its dark wit, this 1945 Ealing crime melodrama plays like a warm-up for the classic comedies that followed. Googie Withers is its femme fatale, a publican's wife who manipulates a young Gordon Jackson. The pay-off is hardly Hitchcockian, but for fans of the British studio, it's well worth a look. **PDS**



Independence Day

★★★★

FROM **MAY 30** / CERT. **TBC**

DVD BR

ALIEN NATION



Top: Donald Trump's private jet was a little ostentatious. **Above:** Will Smith hoped that Harry Connick, Jr. wouldn't suddenly burst into song.

"SELL THE SIZZLE, not the steak," is the salesman's mantra. And with a White House-detonating publicity fusillade that remains one of its most memorable aspects, no movie has embraced flogging itself as enthusiastically as Roland Emmerich's career-making sci-fi/disaster behemoth. But what about the meat beneath the fondly remembered commercial ballyhoo: is it fine fillet or cheap chuck?

Despite its makers' claims to the contrary, re-inventing the alien-invasion trope was hardly a new idea, even back in '96. Smash-hit miniseries *V* had seen malevolent saucers hovering over the world's capitals only a decade earlier. But movie-wise, the timing was perfect. Spielberg's *E. T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* had established a 'friendly alien' motif that begged to be shattered, and Emmerich obliges, gleefully delivering action and comedy beats with crowd-pleasing precision. There's still a thrill in seeing *Saved By The Bell: The College Years* star Kiersten Warren as a drippy hippie blown to smithereens atop a skyscraper as she welcomes our new alien overlords. It also boasts the director's most appealing cast, a classy crew of character actors headed up by the unlikely double act of Jeff Goldblum and Will Smith.

All cleaned up for its 20th birthday, *ID* looks spiffy and the extras are bountiful: a new half-hour documentary with cast and crew interviews (the gaping hole is Will Smith, who left early on in the sequel's development), gag reels, alternative ending and assorted ephemera. Unpretentious, satisfying rump, then. **ADAM SMITH**

"One of the most formally perfect films of the '70s."







Carrie

1976 / OUT **NOW** / CERT. **18**

DVD BR

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

BRIAN DE PALMA'S *CARRIE* OPENS with a volleyball game. Starting up high, revelling in the geometry of the court lines, the camera moves down to find Carrie White (Sissy Spacek), singled out by the opposition as a weak link, jeered at by her own teammates. It's an inauspicious start for a flick that winds up batshit crazy, but it does encapsulate the film in a microcosm. An outcast. The hierarchies of girl power. A humanised kind of horror. A director working at the peak of his creativity. The only thing missing is the pig's blood.

By 1976, De Palma was out of step with his fellow Movie Brats, the only one not to have had a mainstream hit. Steven Spielberg had *Jaws*. Martin Scorsese won at Cannes with *Taxi Driver*; George Lucas was riding high on *American Graffiti* and famously shared casting sessions for *Star Wars* with *Carrie*. De Palma had earned kudos with political satires (*Greetings*, *Hi Mom!*), cult curios (*Get To Know Your Rabbit*, *Phantom Of The Paradise*) and Hitchcock pastiche (*Obsession*), but hadn't found an audience. His box-office salvation came from the first published novel by Stephen King, about a young teenage girl with telekinetic powers. Famously, King threw his first manuscript in the trash, only for it to be rescued by his wife. The paperback rights were eventually sold for $400,000.

It's a robust story that nonetheless spawned a terrible 1999 sequel, *Carrie 2: The Rage*, a disastrous 2002 TV movie remake, a why-bother 2013 adaptation with Chloë Grace Moretz, and an ill-fated musical. The original worked in part because there could be no better fit than De Palma. Not only does he have a tough, cold quality as a filmmaker that suits the material, but few can think through a story better cinematically. Unlike most modern horror, he takes time escalating Carrie's telekinetic powers, starting small by smashing a light bulb, flipping an ashtray and upending a kid (actually De Palma's nephew) on a bike, her powers only ever emerging from her anger. The film also unsettles by breaking conventions. There is full-frontal nudity in shot *two*. Likable characters are killed off to suggest all bets are off. In its final third, *Carrie* launches a bonkers operatic *Grand Guignol* but not before De Palma has paved the way with a beautifully orchestrated overture of dread.

For all its horror-movie chops, *Carrie* displays different colours too. It's a terrific teen picture — cruising with Nancy Allen's Queen Bitch Chris and John Travolta's dumbass Billy could come straight from *Dazed And Confused* — and specifically a terrific female teen picture. This is about really mean girls, nailing the dynamics of cliques and the dangers in not conforming with the crowd. As ever with De Palma, it can also be read as a black comedy. Oscar-nominated Piper Laurie offers a barnstorming performance as Carrie's religious-fanatic mother, doing an amazing job of being over-the-top but still believable and real. Yet within the Gothic, De Palma injects goofiness. The bizarre moment where William Katt's Tommy Ross and buddies start talking at triple speed while shopping for tuxedos speaks of a director who knows how to balance dark with light. If nothing else, *Carrie* is a masterpiece in flipping tones.

The filmmaking is equally bravura. Delays in financing meant De Palma had an inordinate amount of time to design his shots, and he came up with one of the most formally perfect films of the '70s. Lush, sensual slo-mo in the shower sequence gives way to handheld raggedness as Carrie struggles to comprehend her period. Split diopters (a lens attachment that keeps both foreground and background in focus) intensify connections between characters. Jump-cuts turn the simple act of chopping vegetables into a portent of doom. A relentlessly circling camera underlines Carrie's dizziness at dancing with prom date Tommy. But De Palma's *pièce de résistance* is prom night, as Chris' plan to drench Carrie in pig's blood is launched. It remains one of cinema's greatest set-pieces, a masterful combination of movie know-how (note how a garland falls down to spell out that the bucket is precisely above Carrie's head) and sphincter-shredding suspense. It is so breathtaking in its virtuosity, you almost forget to care about Carrie.

That you do feel for her is down to Sissy Spacek. De Palma was going with Betsy Slade, who he loved in *Our Time*, until Spacek walked in, sporting a homemade sailor's suit, an unwashed face and Vaseline in her hair. Spacek's emotional commitment is total. Her hysteria over her first period is so raw, her joy at just sitting amongst chintzy cut-out stars at a prom deeply touching. Watching her happiness unravel is the true horror of *Carrie*.

1 Prom Queen Sissy Spacek's Carrie with her beau, William Katt's Tommy Ross.
2 John Travolta's bad boy Billy Nolan, bucket of pig's blood out of shot.
3 Carrie and the pig's blood get acquainted and all hell is let loose.



WORDS
IAN FREER

• ILLUSTRATION: PETER STRAIN

Archive

THE MONTH'S BIGGEST RE-RELEASES

WORDS **SIMON CROOK**

The Black Cat

1981

★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **18**

BR

→ Purr-der mystery. Summoned by Patrick Magee's psycho psychic, a devil cat shreds the residents of an English village. Ripping up the source story, Lucio Fulci mutates Poe's classic into a demented slasher, swapping knives for claws while piling on the stylistic overkill: clouds of dry ice, fruity acting, lashings of lurid, splashy gore. Imagine Freddy Krueger with whiskers.

The Color Of Money

1986

★★★★



FROM **MAY 9**
CERT. **15**

BR

→ Scorsese's gripping sequel to *The Hustler* finds Fast Eddie, now a jaded burn-out, reignited by Vincent, a headstrong hotshot whom he reshapes into a pool shark. Paul Newman won an Oscar, but Tom Cruise is unforgettable as his obnoxious protégé. Likewise, Scorsese's hyper-stylish vision of the game: the balls ricochet like colliding atoms.

The Ninth Configuration

1980

★★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **15**

BR

→ Locked inside a remote, misty castle, Stacy Keach's shrink tries to 'cure' the inmates of a military asylum (one of whom is staging *Hamlet* for dogs). Jerking from high farce to theological chin-stroke, William Peter Blatty's director debut is a maddening, mannered if fascinating Marmite movie. Profound puzzle or pretentious poppycock? The answer is to experience it for yourself.

The Jerk

1979

★★★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **12**

DVD

→ Born a poor black child, Steve Martin heads for St. Louis, where he finally discovers his, er, "special purpose". Loosely hooked on a rags-to-riches plot, Martin's stupidest movie is like a cinematic record of his wild-and-crazy stand-up routines, jammed with gags that'll leave you more cross-eyed than an Opti-Grab. Don't try the cat-juggling at home.

The Eiger Sanction

1975

★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **15**

DVD

→ It's largely forgotten, but here's proof that even Clint Eastwood caught the wannabe-Bond bug. This Cold War thriller sends his assassin up the Eiger to take out a Soviet spook. The tone is less 007, more Dirty Harry in crampons. Clint's stunt-work draws mighty gasps, but as director his grip slackens and the film freefalls into cliché. Like sliding down a mountain made of Swiss action-cheese.

Car Wash

1976

★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **PG**

BR

→ Employees of LA's Dee-Luxe Car Wash doss, prank and shirk their way through a frantic day, set to a pounding disco soundtrack. Bursting with scruffy energy, Michael Schultz's improvised comedy created the blueprint for the slacker movie, its influence evident in *Clerks*, *Barber Shop* and the films of Richard Linklater.

Delta Force 2: The Colombian Connection

1990

★★



FROM **MAY 2**
CERT. **18**

BR

→ Armed with bulletproof beard, Chuck Norris solves the War On Drugs the Chuck way: by blowing everybody up. Take that, cocaine! He swings through trees and dodges bazooka rockets, but even he's powerless against brother Aaron's lumpy direction. Billy Drago's pony-tailed, super-snide drug lord is a plus, while the title's splendidly pointless: Colombia isn't even mentioned.

Life Of Pi

2012

★★★★★



FROM **NOW**
CERT. **PG**

BR

→ Shipwrecked boy and Bengal tiger battle for survival on a drifting lifeboat. Unfilmable? Ang Lee's adaptation of Yann Martel's parable is a defiant miracle — it's emotionally rich and visually luminous, images sparkling like an exploding rainbow. Seamless CGI made it all possible, but it's Lee who makes you believe. That rug-pulling final act is devastating.

The Firm

1989

★★★★★



FROM **MAY 23**
CERT. **18**

BR

→ The yob-father of hooligan movies. Unlike its oiky offspring, the remorseless violence in Alan Clarke's TV drama is ugly, shockingly hollow and as exotic as a pork pie. The brutal truth is that male-rage is the result of impotence and boredom, personified by a frothing Gary Oldman. His performance is untamed, rabid and arguably his greatest.

Two Weeks In The Midday Sun: A Cannes Notebook

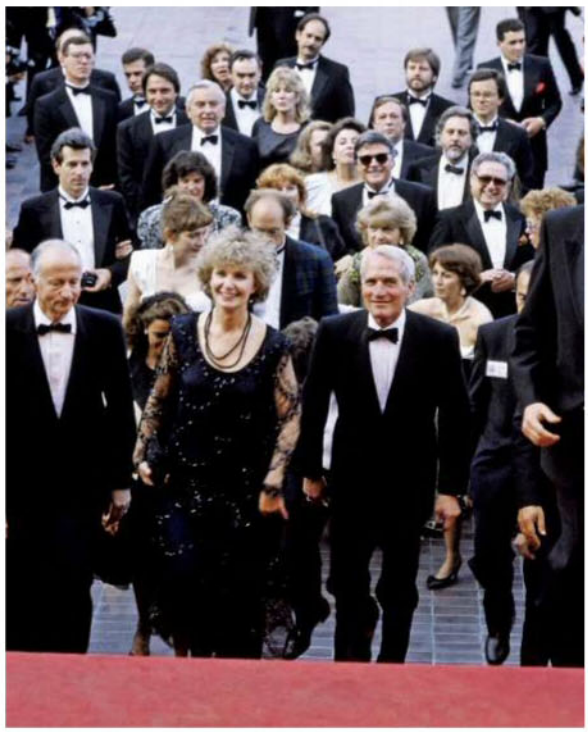
★★★★

AUTHOR **ROBERT EBERT** / OUT **NOW**

KING PEN

THE CANNES FILM Festival is a place that inspires strange passions. Mark Kermode was ejected from a screening of *The Idiots* for heckling in bad French. Vincent Cassel was booed by his own brother at the premiere of *Irreversible*. Strangest of all, *The Beaver* received a ten-minute standing ovation.

Late, legendary film critic Roger Ebert proves the perfect guide to this fortnight-long endurance test. Originally published in 1987, his diary of that year's Croisette-based goings-on has long been out of print, but is getting a re-release now, just in time for this year's festival, with a new foreword by Martin Scorsese. It remains a spiky, witty, illuminating tour. A bit like Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*, with black coffee instead of hard narcotics, Ebert throws himself headlong into the madness, desperately scrabbling for stories he can file. Battling jetlag, bossy publicists and door-slamming security guards, he winds up in no end of peculiar scenarios: chatting to Ursula Andress about a romcom starring Charlotte Rampling and a chimpanzee; discussing spanking with John Malkovich; visiting Francis Ford Coppola for a junket on his boat HQ, where a gloomy Coppola talks *Apocalypse Now*, but won't let the journalists take notes or tape him.



Paul Newman and wife Joanne Woodward on the red carpet at Cannes in 1987.



At times Ebert loses his focus: there is a lengthy, rambling flashback to his time on the set of *Barfly*, during which he repeats a story he's told earlier. But the book works like gangbusters on two levels. It allows us a peek inside the owlish film expert's inner life, through both hand-drawn sketches and reflections on life beyond the cinema screen. And it provides a hilarious, soldier's-eye view of an event so demented that one of its power-players wears a black running suit with his company's logo all over it. "There are Dantean levels to this festival," Ebert marvels, en route to another interview. Lord knows what he'd have made of Comic-Con.

NICK DE SEMLYEN

FURTHER READING

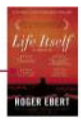
IF YOU CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THE ACCLAIMED FILM CRITIC, CHECK OUT THESE THREE BOOKS BY THE GREAT MAN HIMSELF



Your Movie Sucks (Roger Ebert)
Ebert's most gloriously scathing reviews. The title is his takedown of *Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo*.



Scorsese By Ebert (Roger Ebert)
Contains interviews with his director pal and reviews of his work. Ebert was the first to review a Scorsese film.



Life Itself: A Memoir (Roger Ebert)
His memoirs, published two years before his death in 2013, is great on his relationship with wife Chaz.

ALSO OUT

The Art Of The Jungle Book

★★

AUTHOR **ELLEN WOLFF** / OUT **NOW**



From its animated origins through to its photo-real CGI, Jon Favreau's blockbuster is a film thoroughly deserving of the lavish coffee-table-book treatment. But while the concept art is beautifully drawn (and it's fun to see on-set images of Favreau holding the model Baloo head for his leading actor to react to), the final-shot images are so lo-res as to render the entire enterprise pointless. **JP**

Her Again: Becoming Meryl Streep

★★★

AUTHOR **MICHAEL SCHULMAN** / OUT **NOW**

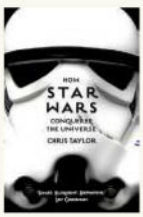


How do you write a book about The World's Greatest Actress™ without descending into a gushing hagiography? Michael Schulman's biography fails to solve this conundrum, with repeated references to Meryl's "alabaster" beauty and "superlative" acting talent. Still, it's comprehensive and richly researched, with nearly 100 interviewees — enough to sate dedicated Streep fans looking for more personal insights. **JN**

How Star Wars Conquered the Universe: The Past, Present, And Future Of A Multibillion Dollar Franchise

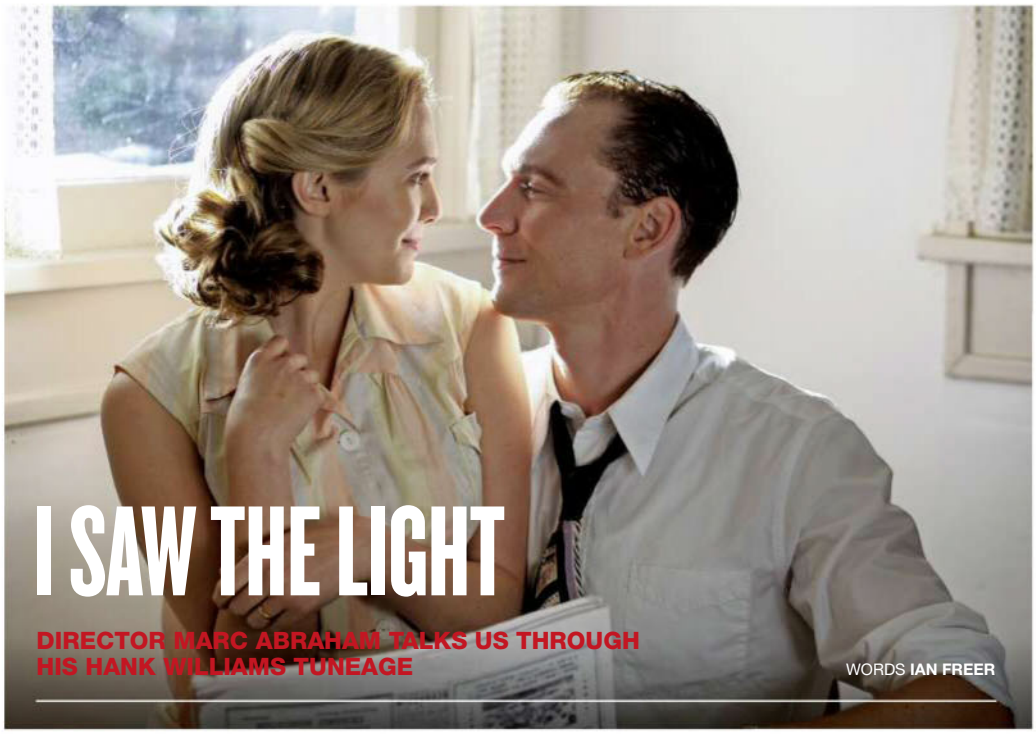
★★★

AUTHOR **CHRIS TAYLOR** / OUT **MAY 5**



There are many books about *Star Wars*, but few are as thorough as Chris Taylor's impeccably researched tome. A fan's-eye view, it brims with affection and geek-pleasing minutiae. Ending just before the release of *The Force Awakens*, however, this re-issue is unfortunately now an incomplete tale. **JD**

• GETTY



I SAW THE LIGHT

DIRECTOR MARC ABRAHAM TALKS US THROUGH HIS HANK WILLIAMS TUNEAGE

WORDS **IAN FREER**

1 Hey Good Lookin' (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
I am prone to irony. Hank (*Tom Hiddleston*) sings this song on Hank Williams Day just as his relationship with his wife Audrey (*Elizabeth Olsen*) is coming to an end.

2 Move It On Over (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
This was the first song that Hank recorded that actually became a hit. It's a song about a guy getting put in the doghouse.

3 Anytime (Eddy Arnold)

4 Field Hand Man (The Delmore Brothers)

5 Jambalaya (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
This plays over the credits. Tom had done such a good job with this, it would be a disservice not to have it somewhere.

6 The Tennessee Waltz (Jo Stafford)

7 My Bucket's Got A Hole In It (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
Tom loved singing this, but I cut it. Sometimes you look back and think, "Why did I do that?" You are under such pressure to shorten your movie. He has never let me forget it.

Above: Audrey Williams (Elizabeth Olsen) with husband Hank (Tom Hiddleston). **Below:** Director Marc Abraham, ready to country rock.



8 That's What's Knockin' Me Out (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
I just love this song, and it was the kind of song Hank was listening to at the time.

9 Santa Baby (Eartha Kitt)

10 Why Don't You Love Me (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
One of the things that influenced me to use this song was that it was in Tom's wheelhouse. He cut this in an hour.

11 Please Don't Let Me Love You (George Morgan)
There is no score in the movie. It is a rare thing. So when I did use source music, I really wanted it to be source music. This has just got such a haunting aspect to it.

12 Honky Tonkin' (Tom Hiddleston and the Saddle Spring Boys)
Hank's brilliance was not as a musician: it was in his lyrics. They are so powerful. But Honky Tonkin' is just fun.

13 Lovesick Blues (Emmett Miller)
This was the first song where Hank let himself yodel. He really let loose on it. It went to number one. Tom (*who sings it in the film*) was unstoppable on this: he worked for ten days. He's a force of nature, that guy.

EMPIRE PLAYLIST



Monkeys*

1. *Caesar's Home* **Patrick Doyle** ***Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes***
2. *The Experiment* **Dickon Hinchliffe** ***Project Nim***
3. *A Fateful Meeting* **James Newton Howard** ***King Kong* (2005)**
4. *I Wan'na Be Like You* **Louis Prima and Phil Harris** ***The Jungle Book* (1967)**
5. *The Jungle Chase* **John Williams** ***Indiana Jones And The Crystal Skull***
6. *Kala And Kerchak* **David Newman** ***Tarzan* (2013)**
7. *Kong Hits The Big Apple* **John Barry** ***King Kong* (1976)**
8. *Main Title Deconstruction* **Danny Elfman** ***Planet Of The Apes* (2001)**
9. *Planet Of The End Credits* **Michael Giacchino** ***Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes***
10. *Two Worlds* **Phil Collins** ***Tarzan* (1999)**
11. *Under The Stars* **Hans Zimmer** ***The Lion King***
12. *Upside Down* **Jack Johnson** ***Curious George***

TO LISTEN TO THE ABOVE, SEARCH 'EMPIRE MAGAZINE' ON SPOTIFY.

* (OKAY, WE'VE INCLUDED GORILLAS, ORANGUTANS AND OTHER ASSORTED PRIMATES)



Dual attack: Academy Assassin and Herald Of White join forces to battle The Dancer Of The Boreal Valley.

Dark Souls III

★★★★

OUT **NOW / PC, PS4, XBOX ONE**

NOW 30 PER CENT LIGHTER

FROM THE DOOM-laden opening to its final, nightmarish boss, *Dark Souls III* is an oppressive, grim experience that will see you butchered by harmless-looking trash mobs and crushed to bloody ruin by hulking, story-high behemoths. And *Dark Souls* fans wouldn't have it any other way.

Risen from an ancient grave, you set out to hack and slash your way through Lothric, a dying land where humanity's works have been reduced to ash and embers. Your aim is to defeat the Lords Of Cinder in an effort to restore the Flame Of Life. As ever with this series, the baffling lore is secondary to the struggle, whereby you gradually explore the city's crumbling majesty while engaging in battles with a menagerie of unholy minions.

Souls' particular brand of third-person combat has always been its biggest strength and this offers a keen evolution, with new character types, weapons and spells. The more flexible character creation opens the game up to varied play styles, although many of the more nuanced classes will only shine in the hands of seasoned players.



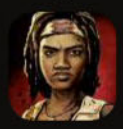
Praising the sun in the medieval kingdom of Lothric.

But while the challenge is significant, *Dark Souls III* isn't nearly as tough as its infamous predecessors. And when difficulty is an integral part of the series' appeal (integral even to the real-world mythology surrounding the games), that's both a blessing and a curse.

It's never easy, but it is more forgiving, making it more accessible to players who have been tempted by the series but deterred by its reputation. For instance, weapons now have Battle Arts: more powerful attacks made available when using a two-handed grip, making melee battles more akin to magical ones. These feel like a direct concession to newcomers, a kind of failsafe attack — 'unleash in case of Yhorm Of The Profaned Capital'. Defeat major enemies and you'll glow with the embers they leave behind, boosting both health and power.

Even the most skilled players will still die, frequently, and progression demands a fanatical memorisation of enemy positions, attack patterns, boss strategies and more. But the changes in *Dark Souls III*, while mechanical improvements of the overall game, seem to have placed the lure of a bigger audience above the army of masochistic loyalists that built the game's legend. **MATT KAMEN**

KILL THE COMMUTE

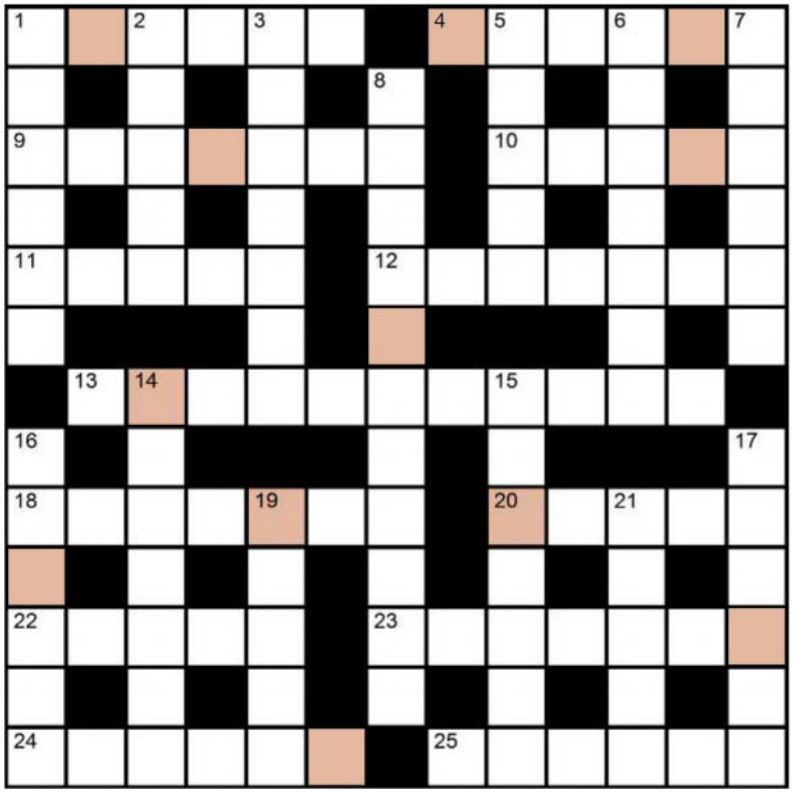


THE WALKING DEAD: MICHONNE
iOS/ANDROID

Telltale Games' series of *Walking Dead* spin-offs continues with everyone's favourite urban samurai in the title role. Like Telltale's original game, this is an interactive story, with bouts of gory violence interspersed with tricky moral decisions that have far-reaching consequences. Episodes 1 and 2 (of 3) are available now.

FINAL FANTASY IX
iOS

Having re-released *FFVII*, Square Enix has skipped over *VIII* and gone straight to *IX*. Initially under-appreciated, this instalment is actually one of the better ones, adopting a more classical fantasy setting than its immediate predecessors and blessed with a more coherent story. Not cheap at £14.99 but with an easy 50 hours of gameplay to be had, *Final Fantasy IX* is enormously rewarding.



ACROSS

1 House linked with Sean Connery in 1990 (6)
4 Sounds comforting, this Anthony Hopkins/Colin Farrell killer jaunt (6)
9 *Thor* director Kenneth (7)
10 It was subtitled *The Rise And Fall Of A Real Life Mafia Don* (5)
11 Johnny Depp's chameleon-like role? (5)
12 Boudoir that Tom Wilkinson was in during 2001 (7)
13 Distraught Sandy Gaster provides a Kathryn Bigelow creation (7,4)
18 Unsurprisingly this Josh Lucas starrer really bombed at the box office (7)
20 *The Lord Of The Rings* character portrayed by Liv Tyler (5)
22 Love, French style, as shaped by Michael Haneke (5)
23 Uwe Boll's 2009 mass-murder thriller that spawned a 2014 sequel (7)
24 India, Olivia Hussey's daughter (6)
25 They were connected to demons in this *Da Vinci Code* sequel (6)

DOWN

1 Could be Wagner or Pattinson (6)
2 Superhero release in which Michael Jai White portrayed the title character (5)
3 Vanessa Redgrave's terpsichorean triumph (7)
5 In which George Burns appeared as the Almighty (2,3)
6 Perkins, forever remembered as Norman Bates (7)
7 Gamine, like a film co-produced by Mick Jagger? (6)
8 Film that was nominated for five Oscars at the 2016 ceremony (3,3,5)
14 British '60s film that had theme music by The Shadows (3,4)
15 Gary Farmer portrayed Nobody in this Jim Jarmusch movie (4,3)
16 It was great for Steve McQueen (6)
17 Game that provided Harrison Ford with the role of Colonel Hyrum Graff (6)
19 Creepy Peter seen in *Casablanca* (5)
21 — *Rider*, film for which Keisha Castle-Hughes was Oscar-nominated. (5)

WIN!



DAVID O'RUSSELL'S *JOY*, WHICH REUNITES Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper for the fourth time, tells the story of the titular airline ticket clerk-turned-business woman whose 'Miracle Mop' makes her a ton of moolah. Anchored by terrific performances from both Lawrence (who scored an Oscar nomination) and Cooper, and with strong support from the likes of Robert De Niro and Virginia Madsen, it's a heartwarming comedy-drama that achieves the unlikely — making cleaning utensils fun. To celebrate its release on Digital HD, DVD and Blu-ray, we have a money-can't-buy prize up for grabs — a selection of actual props used in the film, including the sheet of *Something Stupid* lyrics we see pinned on Jackie's (Dascha Polanco) kitchen wall, Joy's drawing of the prototype gadget, and the mop itself, as wielded by Ms. Lawrence. Plus we'll throw in a copy of the film on Blu-ray. To be in with a chance of winning, complete the crossword, solve the anagram and text your answer to the number below. Here's hoping you'll clean up! (Sorry.)

JOY IS OUT ON DIGITAL HD, DVD AND BLU-RAY NOW, FROM TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT.

Competition ends May 23

HOW TO ENTER Take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of an actor, actress, director or character. Text 'EMPIRE' to 83070, followed by your answer, name and address (with a space between each element of your message!). Texts cost 50p plus standard operator costs. Lines close at midnight, May 23. Winners are selected at random. See below for terms and conditions.

MAY ANSWERS ACROSS 1 Dern, **3** Thompson, **9** Richard, **10** Creed, **11** Spirited Away, **14** Art, **16** Gogol, **17** Two, **18** Almost Famous, **21** Alfie, **22** Rio Lobo, **23** Candyman, **24** Eden. **DOWN 1** Doris Day, **2** Ricki, **4** Hud, **5** Michael Caton, **6** Stewart, **7** Neds, **8** Ealing Comedy, **12** Eight, **13** Boys Town, **15** Telefon, **19** O'Dowd, **20** Narc, **22** Rea. **ANAGRAM** Oscar Isaac

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: One entry per person. Texts cost 50p + standard network rate. Ask the bill payer's permission before entering. Entries must be received before May 24 or will not be valid (but the cost of the text may still be charged). One winner will be selected at random. The model of the TV and Blu-ray may vary. Competition promoted by Bauer Consumer Media Limited t/a Empire ("Empire"). Empire's choice of winner is final and no correspondence will be entered into in this regard. The winner will be notified, by phone (on the number the text was sent), between seven and ten days after the competition ends. Empire will call the winner a maximum of three times and leave one message. If the winner does not answer the phone or respond to the message within 14 days of the competition's end, Empire will select another winner and the original winner will not win a prize. Entrants must be over 18, resident in the UK and not be employed by Empire. The prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Empire is not responsible for late delivery or unsatisfactory quality of the prize. Entrants agree to the collection of their personal data in accordance with Empire's privacy policy: http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk/. Winner's personal details will be given to prize provider to arrange delivery of the prize. Bauer reserves the right to amend or cancel these terms or any aspect of the competition (including the prize) at any time if required for reasons beyond its control. Any questions, please email empire@bauermedia.co.uk. Complaints will not be considered if made more than 30 days after the competition ends. Winner's details available on request (after the competition ends) by emailing empire@bauermedia.co.uk. For full T&Cs see http://www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html.

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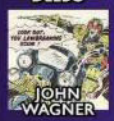
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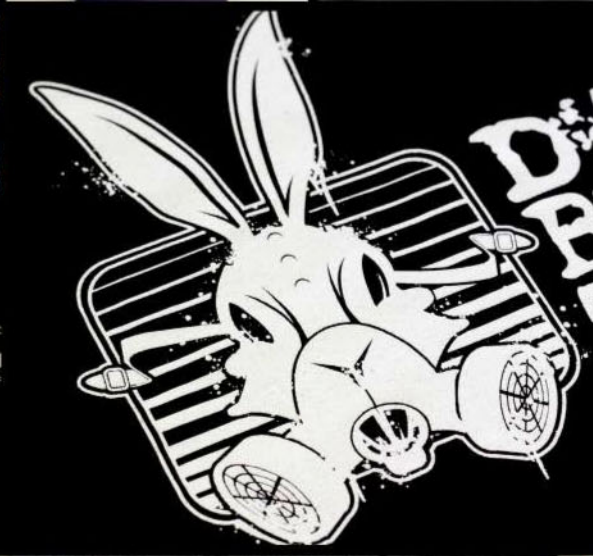












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COMMENT



CRAIG V HATERS V BATMAN V SUPERMAN

I've just been to see *Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice* and I have no idea why there's so much hate for the film. For me, it's up there with most of the other Marvel films, and the ending is really good. Okay, so Doomsday is pretty crap but loads of other Marvel villains are, too. I thought the beginning was excellent and justified the Metropolis catastrophe and showed why Bruce Wayne has issues. Haters gonna hate.

CRAIG MARSHALL, FACEBOOK

Movie bosses are surely now thinking that *Batman v Superman v Eddie The Eagle* is a missed opportunity.

PAUL WOODCOCK, (@QUIZMASTERPW75)



I ALWAYS THOUGHT MAKING LISTS OF MOVIE CHARACTERS WAS A POINTLESS EXERCISE, AND NOW THERE'S PROOF...

JANICE RACKLEY, VIA EMAIL

Um, they're not actually looking to reboot *Spider-Man* again? Are they? Surely even Amazonian tribespeople know his origin by now.

ROB BELL, FACEBOOK

LETTER *of the* MONTH



MARTIAN MIX-UP?

Hey guys! I've been a subscriber for some time now and one of the first features I turn to is the *Empire* Crossword. I always scold myself if I have to turn to IMDb for answers. However, this month, I was stumped by 14 across. The answer appeared to be Art, as in Art Malik, star of *True Lies*, but the clue listed him as being found "amid *The Martian*". At this point, I realised you were referring to his presence in *John Carter* — the same Red Planet, if not the correct film for the clue. Am I right?

NICK EDMONDSON, SURBITON

*Actually, Nick, no, we're afraid you're not. When a crossword clue uses the word "amid", it's an indication that the answer is in the following word(s) — in this instance he's sitting there in M**ART**ian. However, for your commitment to the career of Mr. Malik, have the cinema passes with our compliments.*

Picturehouse ***Empire*'s star letter wins a Picturehouse Membership, plus one for a friend! Valid for one year at 23 Picturehouse Cinemas across the UK, including the brand-new Picturehouse Central in London's West End, each membership comes pre-loaded with four free tickets, and gets you access to priority booking and exclusive discounts on everything in the cinema. When you write to us, please ensure you include your full contact details so we can arrange delivery of your prize.**



X HITS THE SPOT

From the 22nd to the 30th of every month, I will scream and sulk when I get home if there isn't a shiny new *Empire* waiting for me. When I do get it, it's a screamfest worthy of a Guillermo del Toro fanfic. Very many thanks for the *X-Men: Apocalypse* poster you sent with the magazine. I knew there had to be an X-clusive edition soon. THERE HAD TO BE. (Light obsession?)

AMY JIANG, VIA EMAIL

Glad you enjoyed the special subscribers' poster, Amy. It was going to be made of adamantium, but the postman complained.

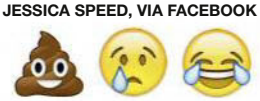
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PAN OF STEEL, @PAN_OF_STEEL

STARS STRUCK

Have you ever thought about changing the stars in your reviews into emojis? You could keep the basic structure — three emojis is a recommendation, but the emojis could highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the film.

JESSICA SPEED, VIA FACEBOOK





EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

Zombieland

"BILL MURRAY, YOU'RE A ZOMBIE?"

SETTING THE SCENE **Screenwriters Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick, who most recently brought us *Deadpool*, knew they wanted a big cameo in their zombie horror-comedy. More specifically, they wanted a movie star who would happily play a funhouse version of themself, as one of the last survivors of the undead apocalypse. They tried to get Kevin Bacon, Joe Pesci, Sylvester Stallone and many more, before landing the biggest fish of all: Bill Murray. The resulting sequences are giddy fun, as Murray apologises for *Garfield*, acts out *Ghostbusters* with a vacuum cleaner and scares our heroes by pretending to be a walking corpse.**

INT. MANSION — DAY
In a vast drawing room, Wichita (Emma Stone) hits golf balls with a club, while Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson) dances to the *Ghostbusters* theme. Wichita skews a shot and hits Tallahassee on the head, knocking him to the floor.

Wichita: Shiiiit!

Tallahassee looks up as a figure lurches into the room, face blood-stained, hair long and stringy.

Tallahassee: Bill Murray, you're a zombie?

As Murray bends down to Tallahassee, Wichita hits him with the golf club. He yells out in pain.

Bill Murray: Ah! Ow! God, I'm on fire! Ouch!

Tallahassee: You're not a zombie. You're talking. You're okay!

Bill Murray: The hell I am!

Wichita: I'm sorry. I didn't know that it was... that it was *you* you.

Tallahassee: Are you... What's with the... the get-up?

Bill Murray: Oh, I do it to blend in. Y'know, zombies don't mess with other zombies. Buddy of mine — make-up guy — showed me how to do this: corn starch, y'know, some berries, a little liquorice for the ladies. It suits my lifestyle, y'know? I like to get out and do stuff. Just played nine holes on the riviera, just walked on — nobody there.

Tallahassee: Goddammit! (*Punches the air*) BILL FUCKING MURRAY! I had to get that out, I don't mean to gush. This is so surreal. I mean, you probably get this all the time — maybe not lately — but I'm, I'm such a huge fan of yours. I mean, I swear, y'know, I have seen every one of your movies a million times and I, I even love your dramatic roles, and just... everything. Six people left in the world, one of them is Bill fuckin' Murray! I know that's not your middle name, but I've been watching you since I was, like, since I could masturbate! I mean, not that they're connected... (*imitating* Caddyshack*'s Carl Spackler*) "Now a former greenskeeper, about to become the Masters champion..."(*He boxes the air in delight.*)

Murray: Well, that's why we do it.

Tallahassee (*kissing Murray's hand*): I love you, Bill. I love you.

Murray bows and mouths, "Thank you."

Tallahassee: Thank *you*.

Murray turns to Wichita.

Murray: You are staring at me. It's a hairpiece. (*Moving it up and down*) It's a piece!

Wichita: I'm sorry. No, it's just that you look remarkably like Eddie Van Halen.

Murray: I just saw Eddie Van Halen.

Wichita: Nuh-uh?

Tallahassee: Really?

Murray: Yeah.

Wichita: Wow.

Tallahassee: Where?

Murray: At the Hollywood Bowl.

Tallahassee: Man, how was that?

Murray: He's a zombie.

Wichita: Aw, that's... tough break.

Government notice
Viral infection information

The virus is **HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS** passing through the blood, saliva and body fluids.

Infection passed through **BITING** and **SCRATCHING.**

It takes less than **20 SECONDS** to become infected.

Symptoms of extreme **RAGE/ AGGRESSION.**

Fatalities caused from **INTERNAL HAEMORRHAGING.**

The infected are drawn to **SOUND/ NOISE.**

The virus can only be eradicated by **KILLING ALL INFECTED VICTIMS.**

There is NO CURE.

Important information. Please read!

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